

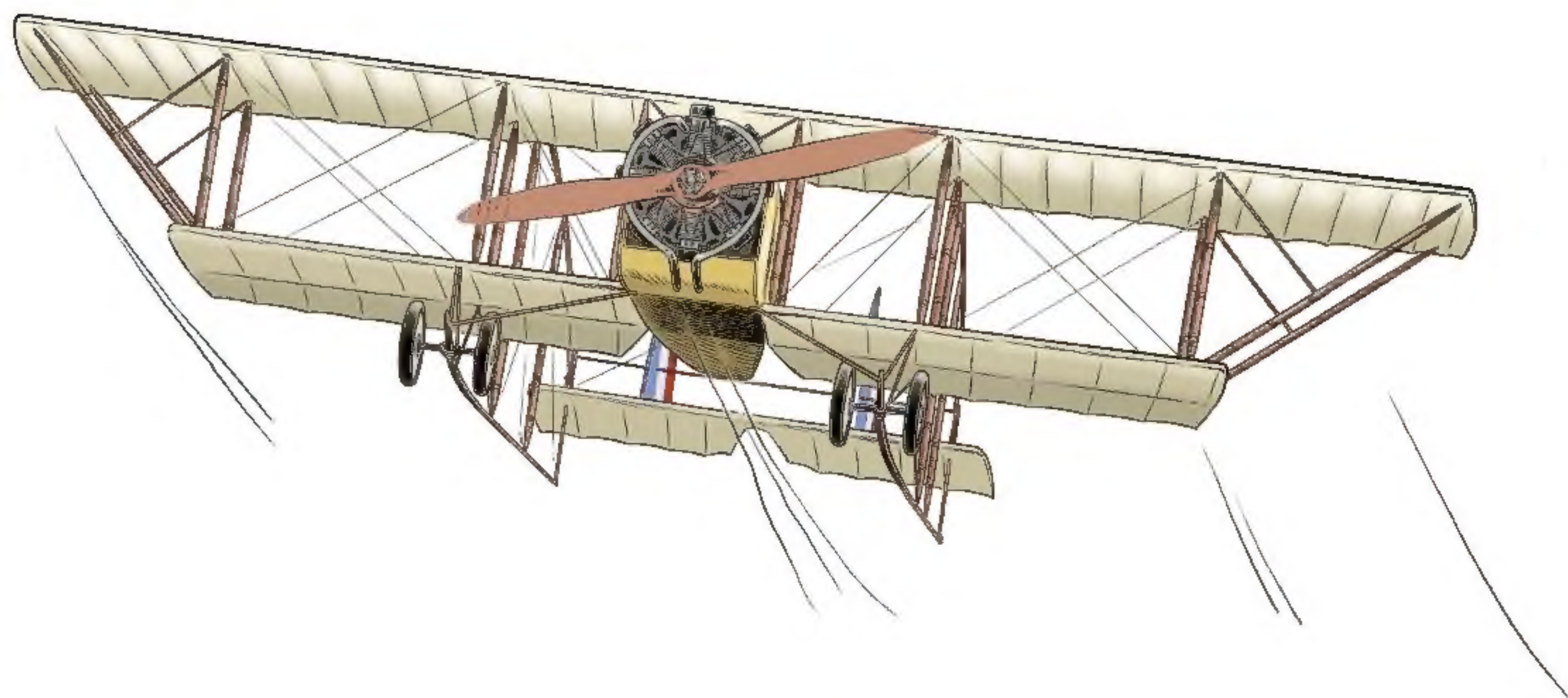
KRAEHN • MILLIEN

THE AVIATOR

2. The Long Climb



euRoPe
COMICS



THE AVIATOR

2. The Long Climb

WRITER

JEAN-CHARLES KRAEHN

ARTIST

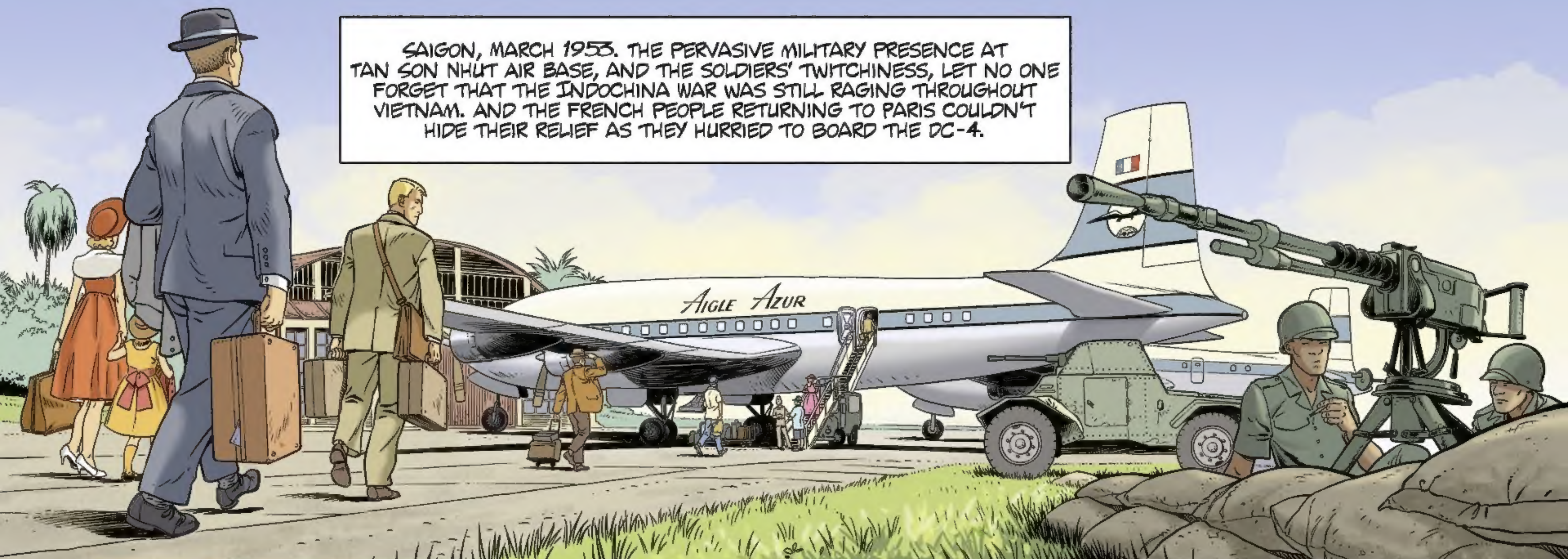
CHRYSS MILLIEN

COLORIST

PATRICIA JAMBERS



SAIGON, MARCH 1953. THE PERVERSIVE MILITARY PRESENCE AT TAN SON NHUT AIR BASE, AND THE SOLDIERS' TWITCHINESS, LET NO ONE FORGET THAT THE INDOCHINA WAR WAS STILL RAGING THROUGHOUT VIETNAM. AND THE FRENCH PEOPLE RETURNING TO PARIS COULDN'T HIDE THEIR RELIEF AS THEY HURRIED TO BOARD THE DC-4.



AMONG THEM WAS YANN CALEC, WHO HAD INTENDED TO SPEND THREE YEARS IN INDOCHINA BUT WAS LEAVING AFTER ONLY ONE--A YEAR SO EMOTIONALLY TURBULENT THAT IT FELT LIKE TEN.



A POSTHUMOUS RECONCILIATION WITH HIS FATHER, THE DISCOVERY OF A HALF-BROTHER, AND A SURPRISE INHERITANCE... NOT TO MENTION ALL THE EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE HE HAD MET... (1)



...INCLUDING "HARD KNOCK" TANGUY, A PILOT AND FRIEND OF YANN'S FATHER. TANGUY HAD SENT YANN HIS PRIVATE DIARIES A FEW DAYS AFTER THEY'D PARTED COMPANY... VOLUMES THAT TOLD THE STORY OF HIS LIFE. (2)



THREE WEEKS LATER, TANGUY HAD CRASHED HIS PLANE INTO A MOUNTAIN. WAS IT HIS DESTINY, OR JUST A TRAGIC ACCIDENT?



(1) SEE VOLUMES 7, 8, AND 9 OF TRAMP.
(2) SEE VOLUME 1 OF THIS SERIES, "TAKE-OFF."

THE LONG CLIMB 1920

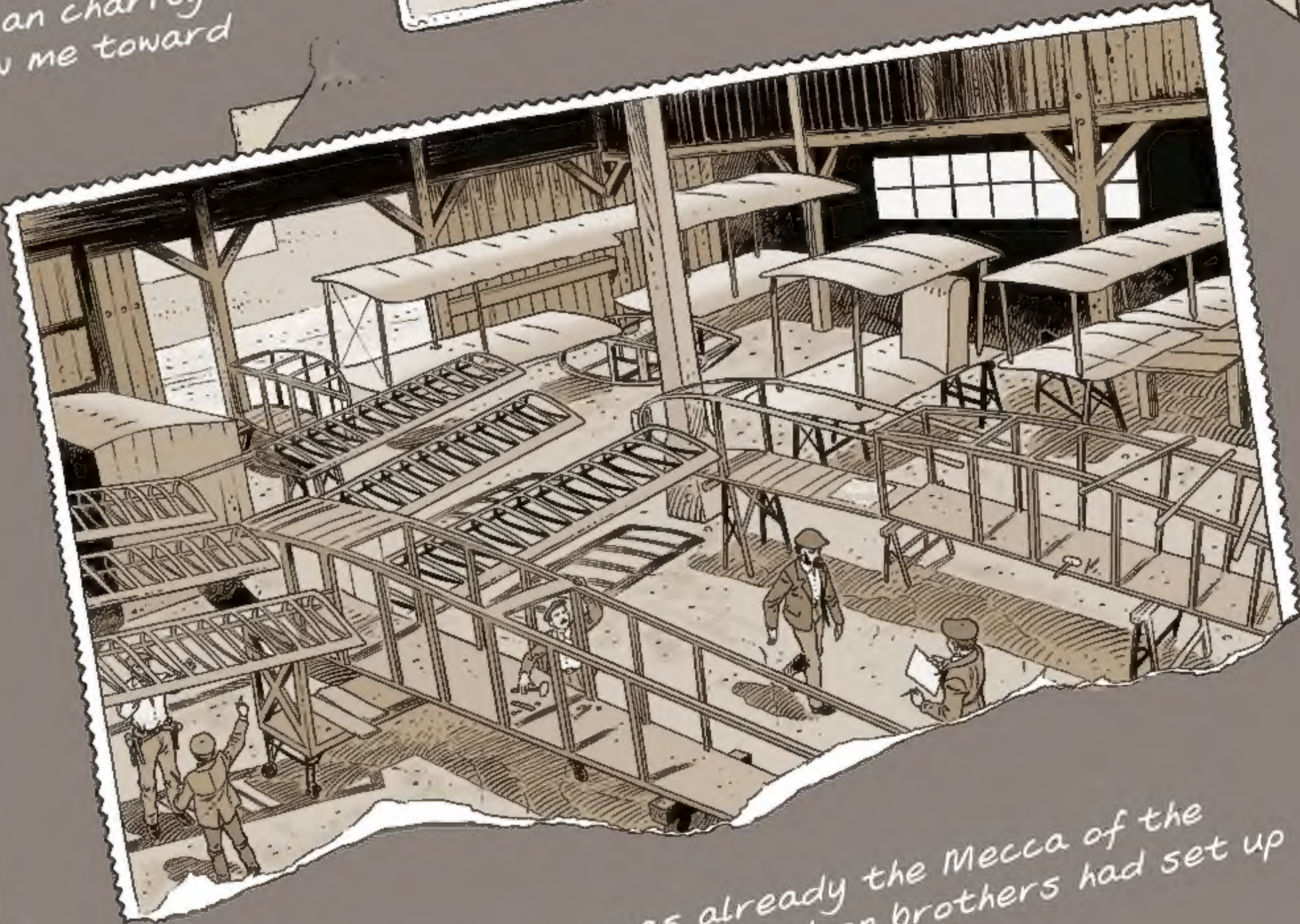


Forced to bring up seven children by herself, my mother worked all hours of the day and night as a seamstress in our tiny apartment in the suburbs, which one of her brothers had finally deigned to rent her "out of Christian charity"—and in doing so, he unwittingly drew me toward my destiny.



After our life in Africa, the move to Paris was very difficult. Despite their wealth, my mother's family refused to help her. By marrying a German—and a Protestant, to boot—she'd become a "Kraut," they said. And although she'd taught us to speak French, our strong foreign accents did us no favors.

We arrived at just the right time, however, to witness a legendary feat of flying. Standing in the Place de l'Étoile, I watched in amazement and envy as Charles Godefroy flew his little Nieuport II, nicknamed "Baby," under the Arc de Triomphe! (1)

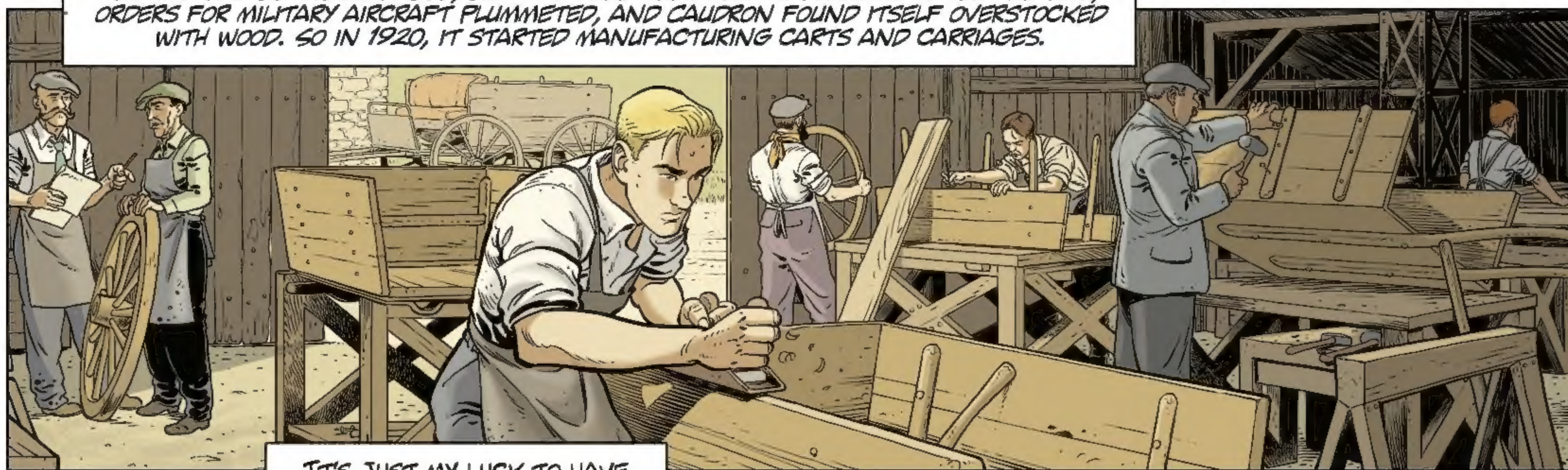


Issy-les-Moulineaux was already the Mecca of the aviation world. In 1915, the Caudron brothers had set up two aircraft factories there.

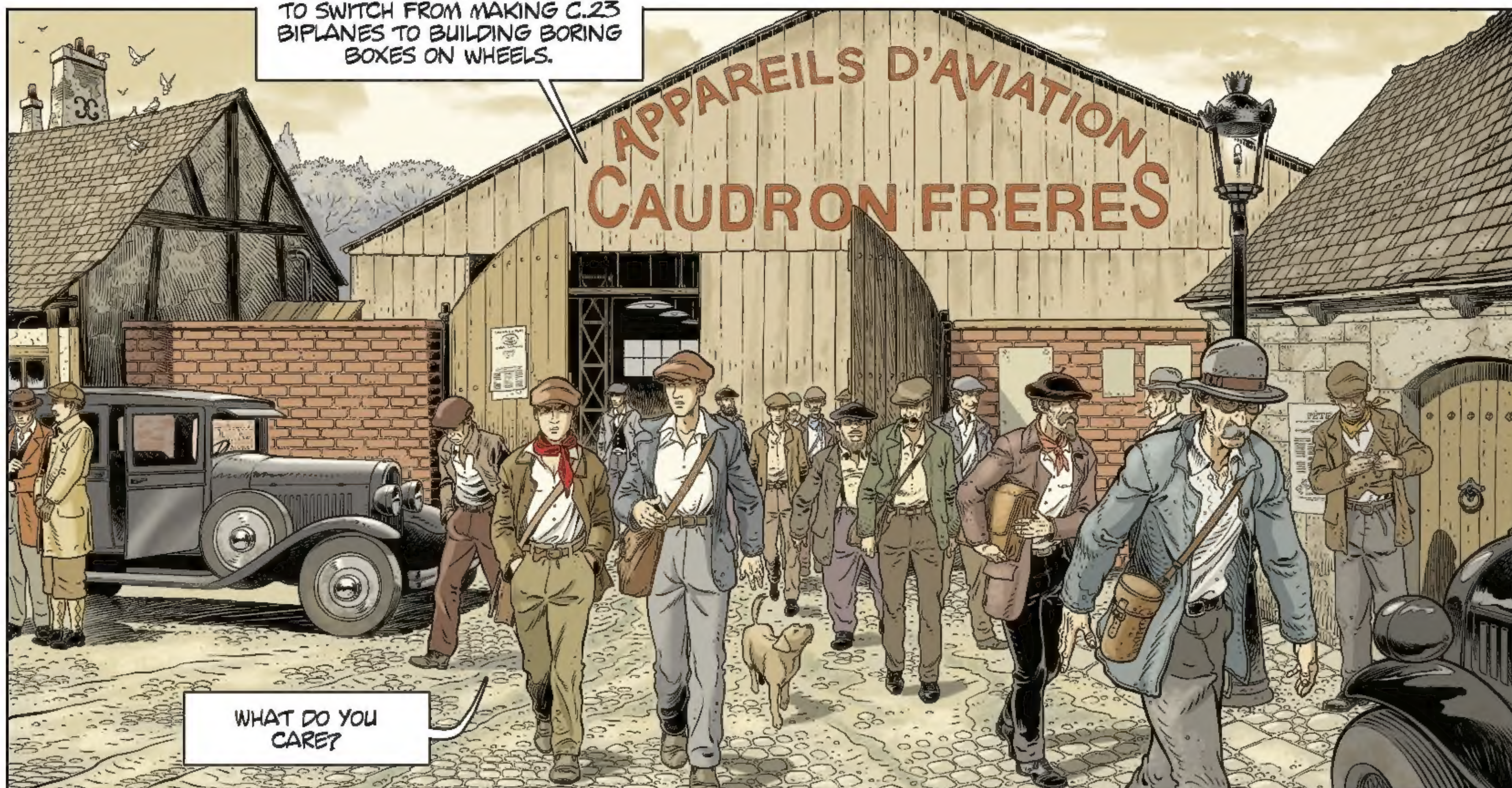
My brother Moses and I—both good mechanics—managed to get taken on as apprentices. It was another small step toward my dream of becoming a pilot.

(1) GODEFROY DID THIS ON AUGUST 7, 1919, AS A PROTEST AGAINST PILOTS HAVING TO MARCH WITH SOLDIERS IN THE PREVIOUS JULY 14 PARADE.

DESTINY MAY BE INESCAPABLE, BUT IT'S SOMETIMES ALSO CAPRICIOUS. AFTER THE WAR, ORDERS FOR MILITARY AIRCRAFT PLUMMETED, AND CAUDRON FOUND ITSELF OVERSTOCKED WITH WOOD. SO IN 1920, IT STARTED MANUFACTURING CARTS AND CARRIAGES.



IT'S JUST MY LUCK TO HAVE TO SWITCH FROM MAKING C.23 BIPLANES TO BUILDING BORING BOXES ON WHEELS.



WHAT DO YOU CARE?

THE PAY'S TERRIBLE EITHER WAY.



IT'S IMPORTANT FOR A PILOT TO KNOW HOW AIRPLANES ARE PUT TOGETHER.

I WON'T LEARN ANY--

HEY, HUN!

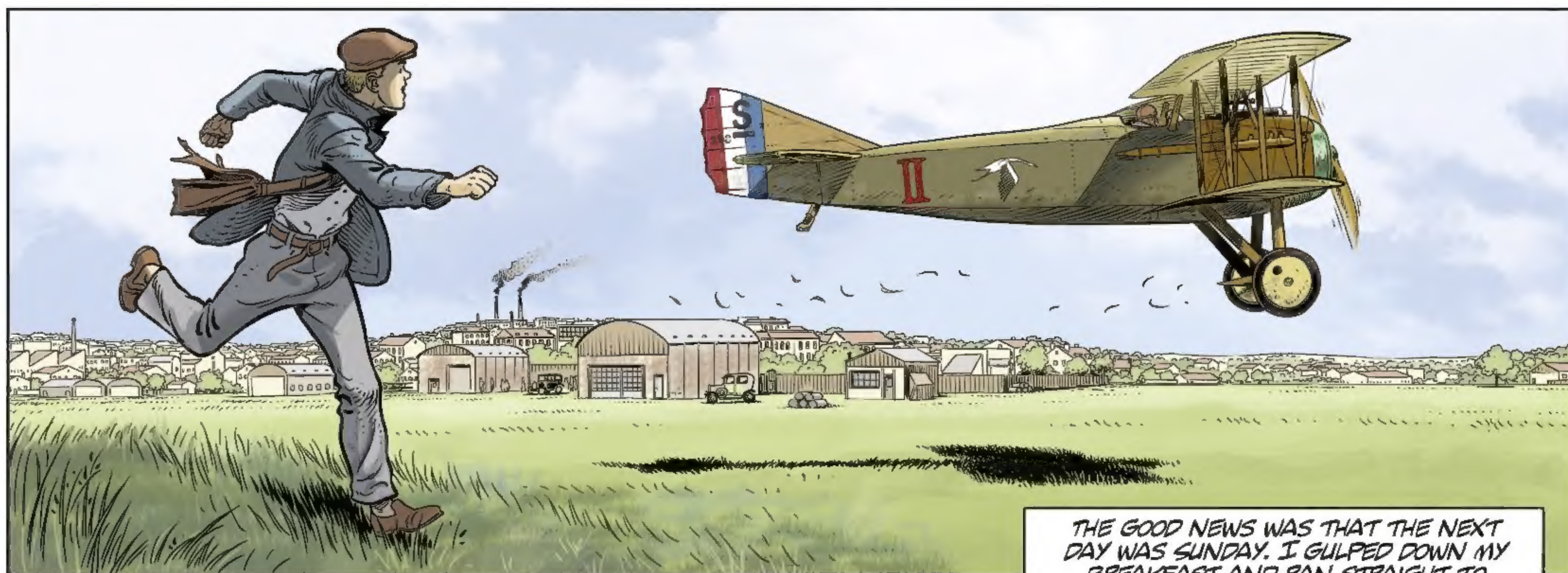
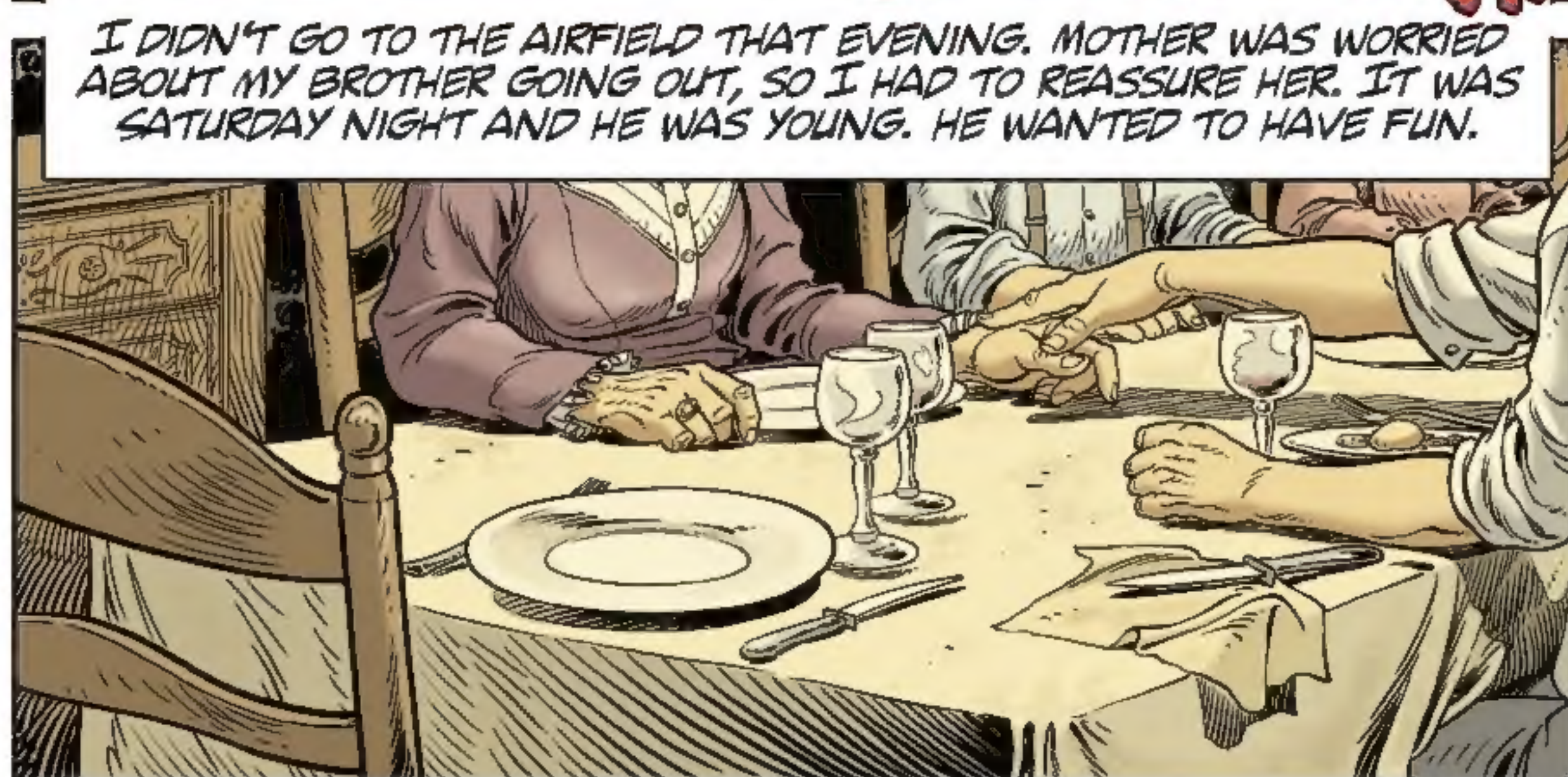
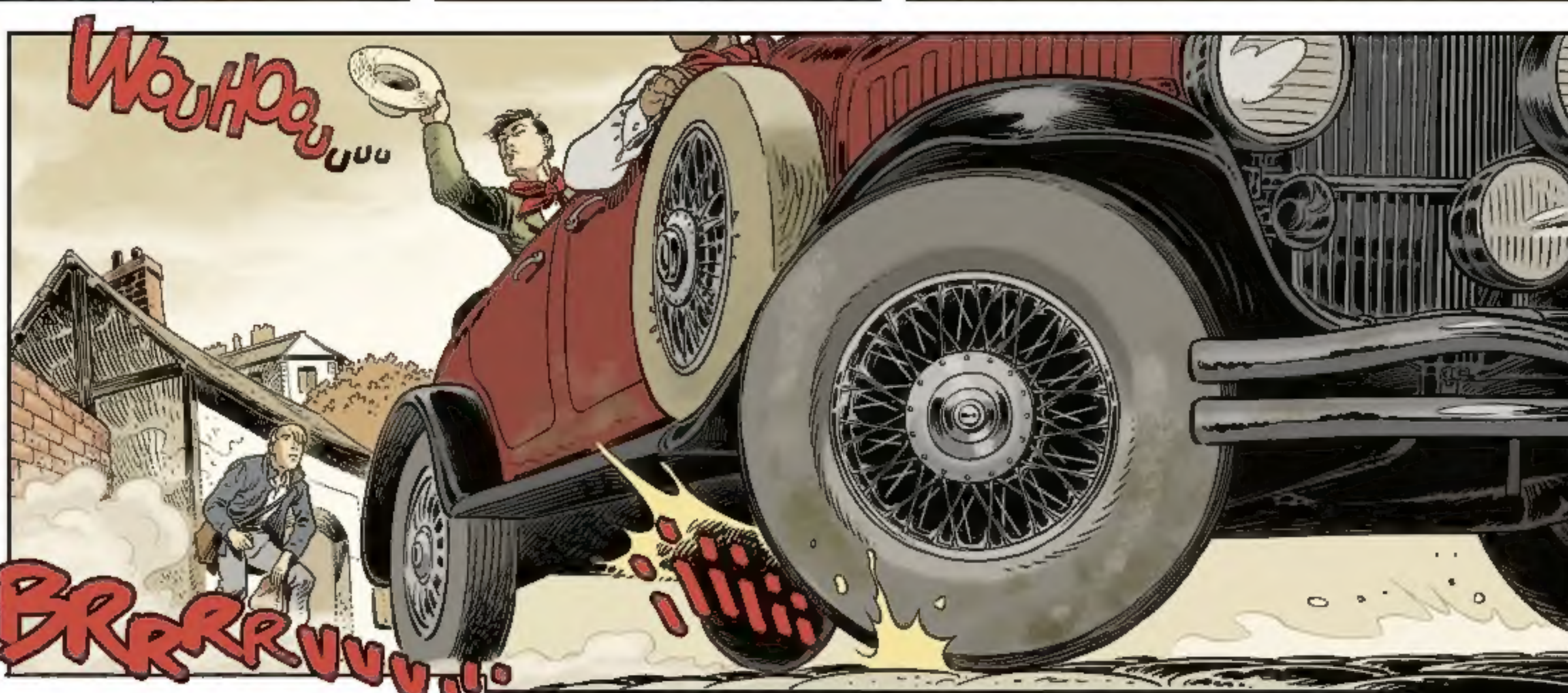


WE'LL BUY YOU A GREEN FAIRY (1) AT MOUNETTE'S! C'MON!



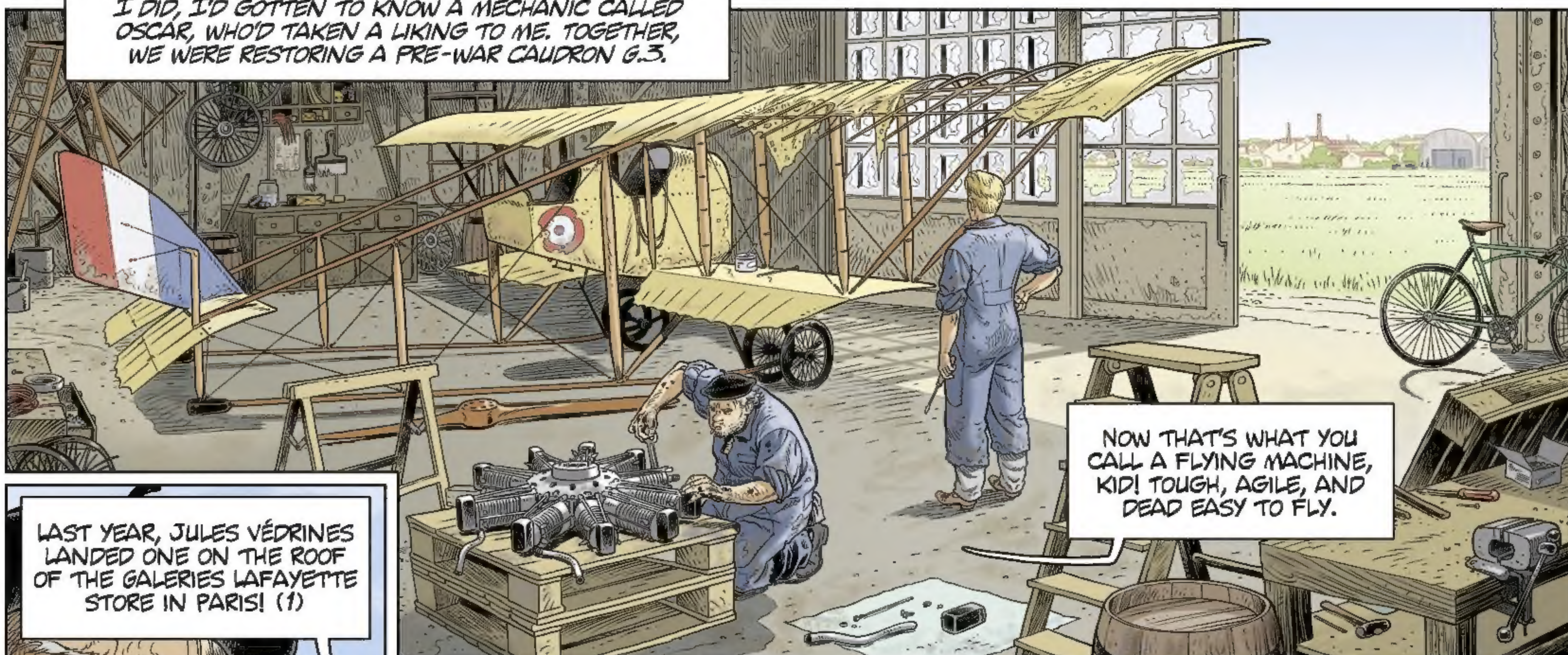
(1) ABSINTHE.





(1) SLANG FOR A FUCK-KNIFE.

HANGING AROUND AT THE EDGE OF THE RUNWAY LIKE I DID, I'D GOTTEN TO KNOW A MECHANIC CALLED OSCAR, WHO'D TAKEN A LIKING TO ME. TOGETHER, WE WERE RESTORING A PRE-WAR CAUDRON G.3.



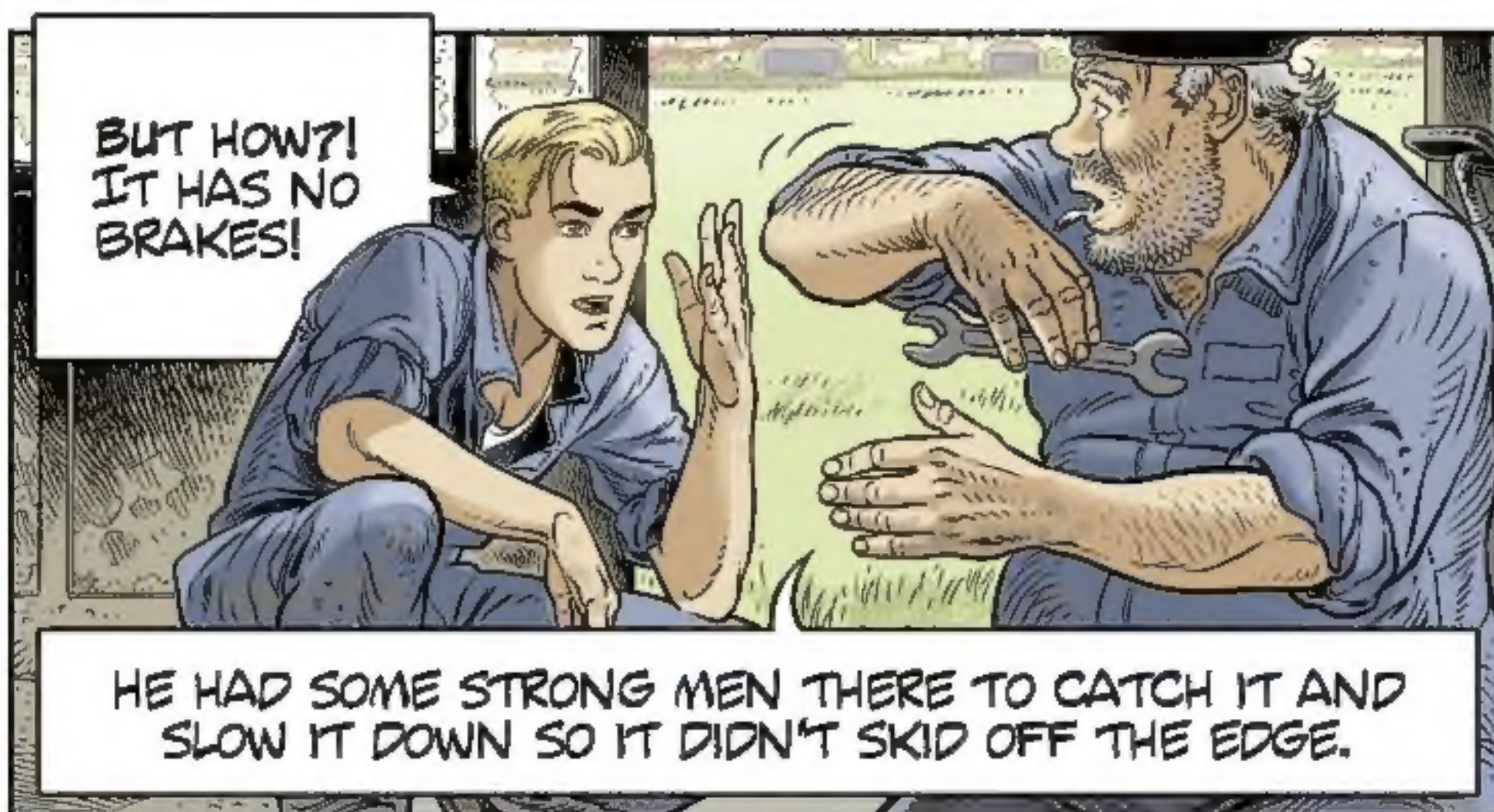
NOW THAT'S WHAT YOU CALL A FLYING MACHINE, KID! TOUGH, AGILE, AND DEAD EASY TO FLY.

LAST YEAR, JULES VÉDRINES LANDED ONE ON THE ROOF OF THE GALERIES LAFAYETTE STORE IN PARIS! (1)



LESS THAN 30 YARDS TO STOP--THAT'S NO MEAN FEAT, KID!

BUT HOW?! IT HAS NO BRAKES!

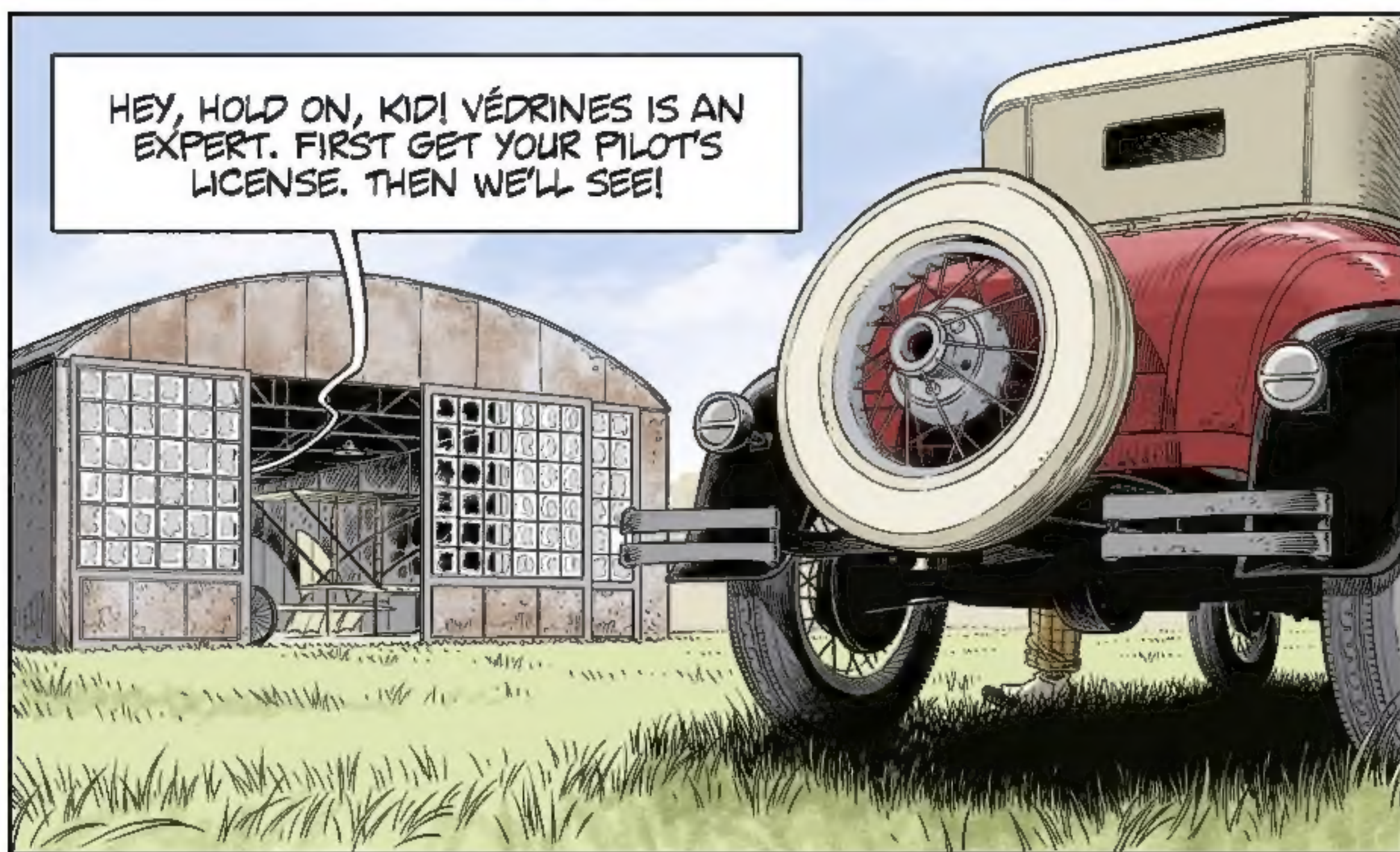


HE HAD SOME STRONG MEN THERE TO CATCH IT AND SLOW IT DOWN SO IT DIDN'T SKID OFF THE EDGE.

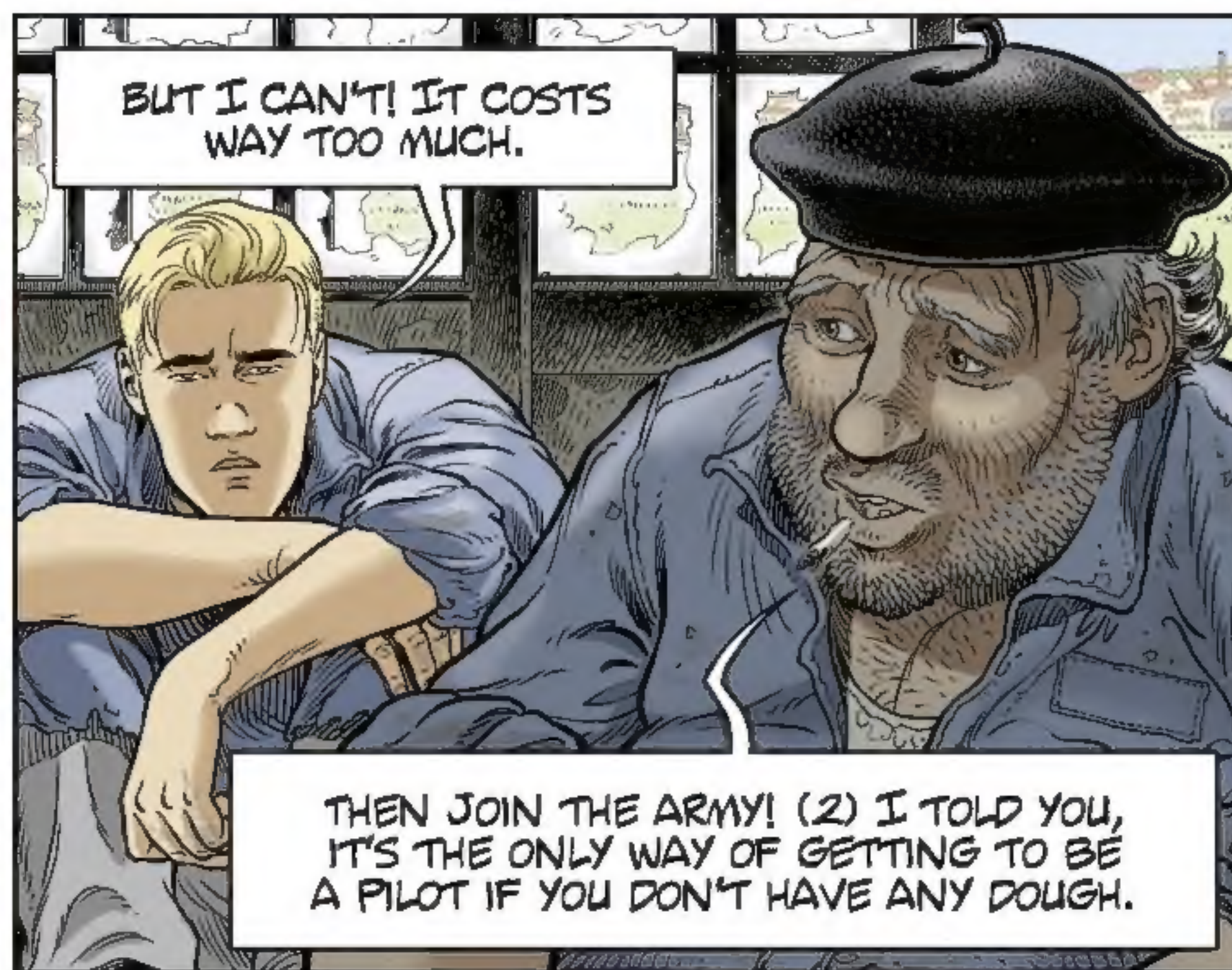
WHOA! THAT'S JUST THE KIND OF STUNT I NEED TO PULL OFF IF I'M GONNA GET MYSELF NOTICED.



HEY, HOLD ON, KID! VÉDRINES IS AN EXPERT. FIRST GET YOUR PILOT'S LICENSE. THEN WE'LL SEE!



BUT I CAN'T! IT COSTS WAY TOO MUCH.



THEN JOIN THE ARMY! (2) I TOLD YOU, IT'S THE ONLY WAY OF GETTING TO BE A PILOT IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY DOUGH.

I DON'T PAY YOU TO CHEW THE FAT, OSCAR. HOW'S THE WORK ON MY PLANE COMING ALONG?



IT'S COMING ALONG JUST FINE, VISCOUNT, JUST FINE. THE ENGINE'S PRETTY MUCH FINISHED. THE ONLY THING LEFT TO DO IS RE-CANVAS THE RIGHT WING.



GOOD...



...BECAUSE IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE I GET MY PILOT'S LICENSE...

(1) THE STORE HAD OFFERED A PRIZE OF 25,000 FRANCS.
(2) THERE WAS NO SEPARATE FRENCH AIR FORCE UNTIL 1934.



...AND I WANT TO START FLYING IT IMMEDIATELY. ALL RIGHT, OSCAR?

THE PLANE WILL BE READY, VISCOUNT.



GOOD! AND WHO IS THIS... PERSON WITH THE DREADFUL ACCENT?

HE'S MY APPRENTICE, VISCOUNT. HE'S A GOOD KID, HE IS.

MY FATHER WAS FROM ALSACE.



OH? A KRAUT, THEN!

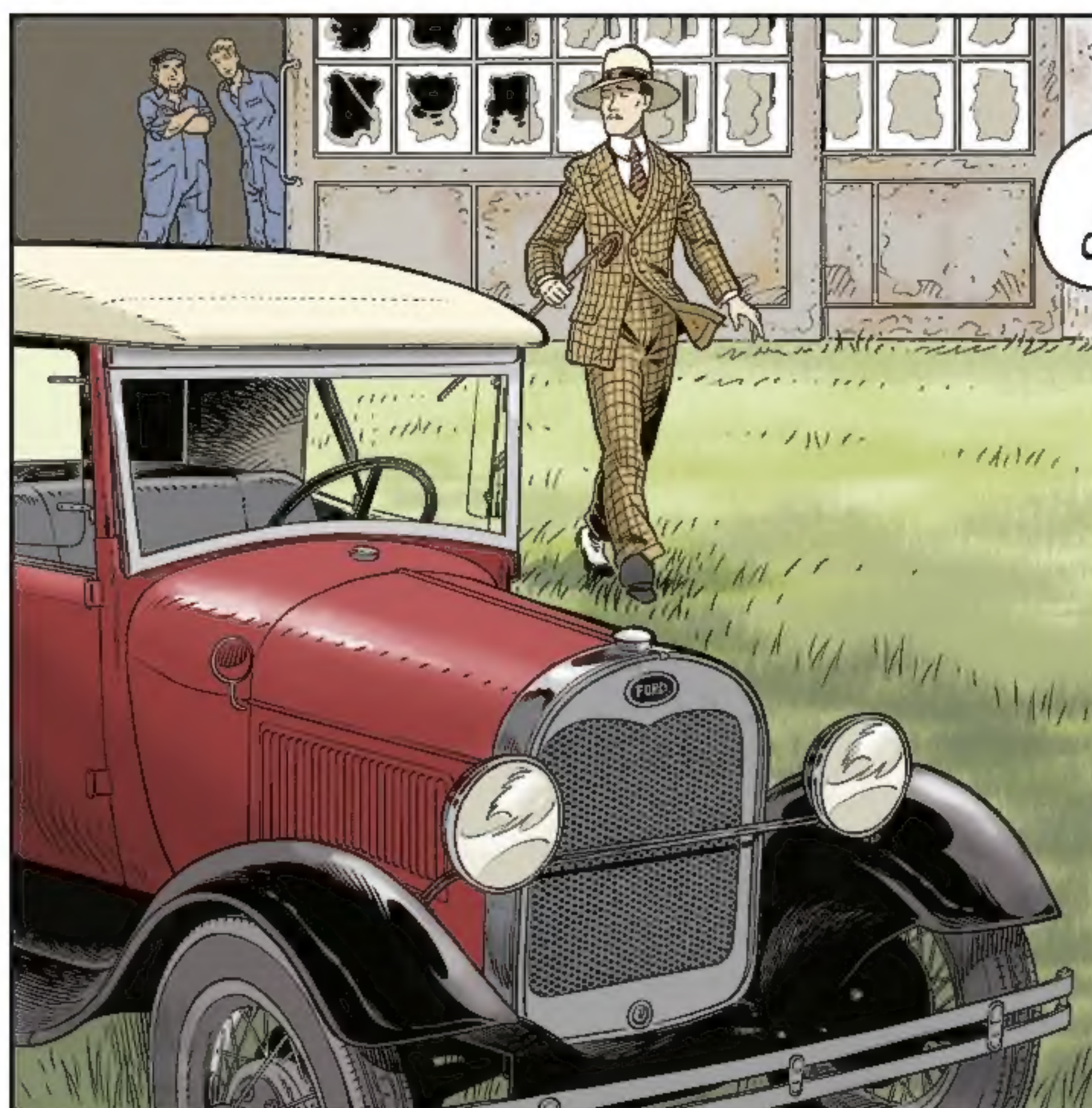
DON'T GIVE AWAY ANY OF OUR SECRETS! ALL RIGHT, OSCAR?



GOOD! NOW, I MUST GET TO A GARDEN PARTY... DON'T LET ME DOWN, OSCAR...

ALL RIGHT?

YOU CAN COUNT ON ME, SIR.

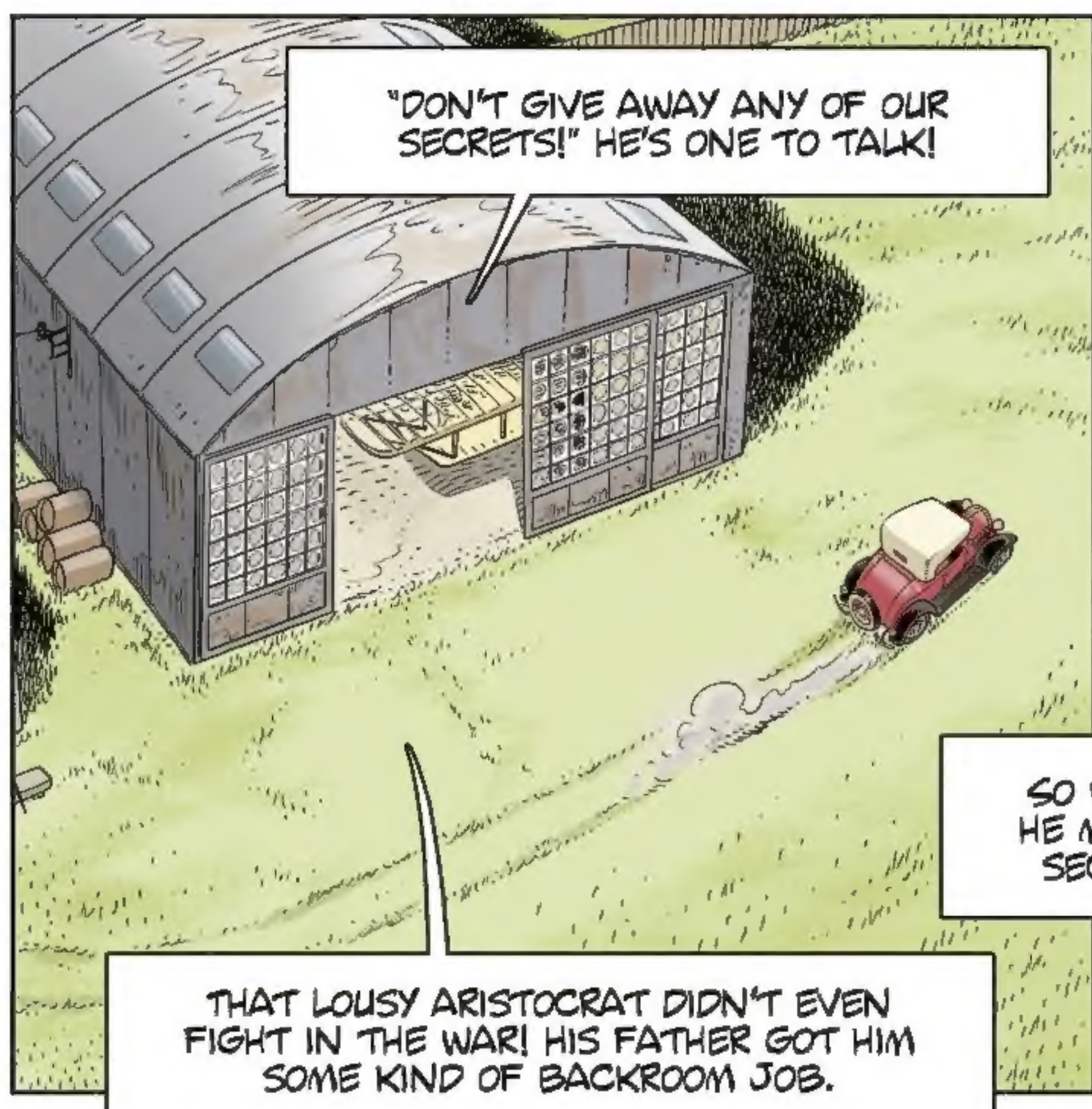


"ALL RIGHT, SIR!"

"ALL RIGHT, OSCAR?"

"YES, MR. VISCOUNT, SIR!"

PFFFFFFF...



"DON'T GIVE AWAY ANY OF OUR SECRETS!" HE'S ONE TO TALK!

THAT LOUSY ARISTOCRAT DIDN'T EVEN FIGHT IN THE WAR! HIS FATHER GOT HIM SOME KIND OF BACKROOM JOB.



SO WHY DID HE MENTION SECRETS?

BECAUSE HE ASKED ME TO FIT THIS OLD THING WITH THE LATEST ANEMOMETER. WHAT A JOKE!

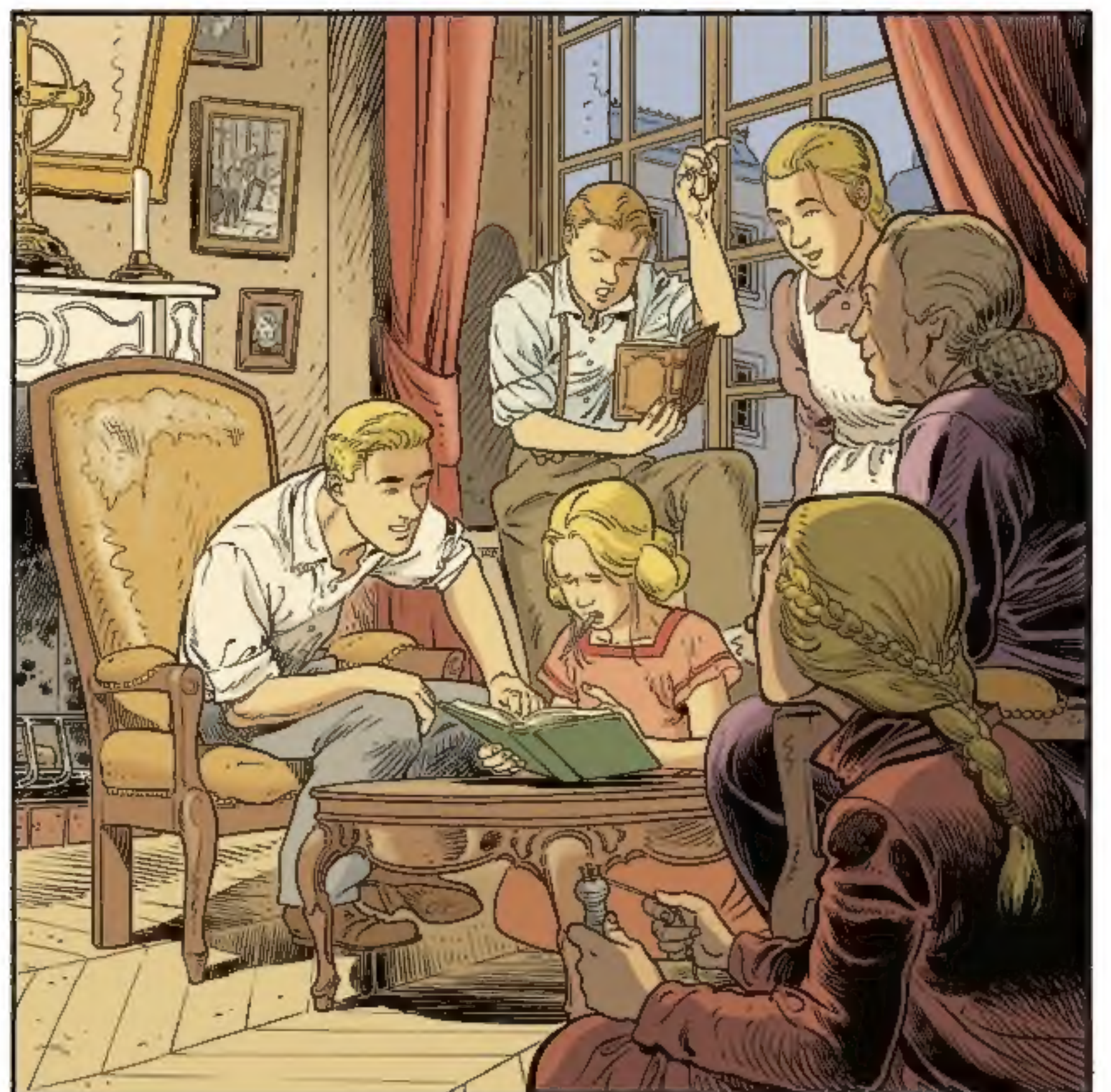


THAT DANDY JUST WANTS TO SHOW OFF, BUT HE'S ALREADY FAILED HIS TEST TWICE. HE'LL NEVER PASS. HIS INSTRUCTOR TOLD ME HE SHITS HIMSELF EVERY TIME HE GOES UP!

BOTH MOSES AND I GAVE ALMOST EVERYTHING WE EARNED TO MOTHER TO HELP PAY FOR ALL THE THINGS THE FAMILY NEEDED.

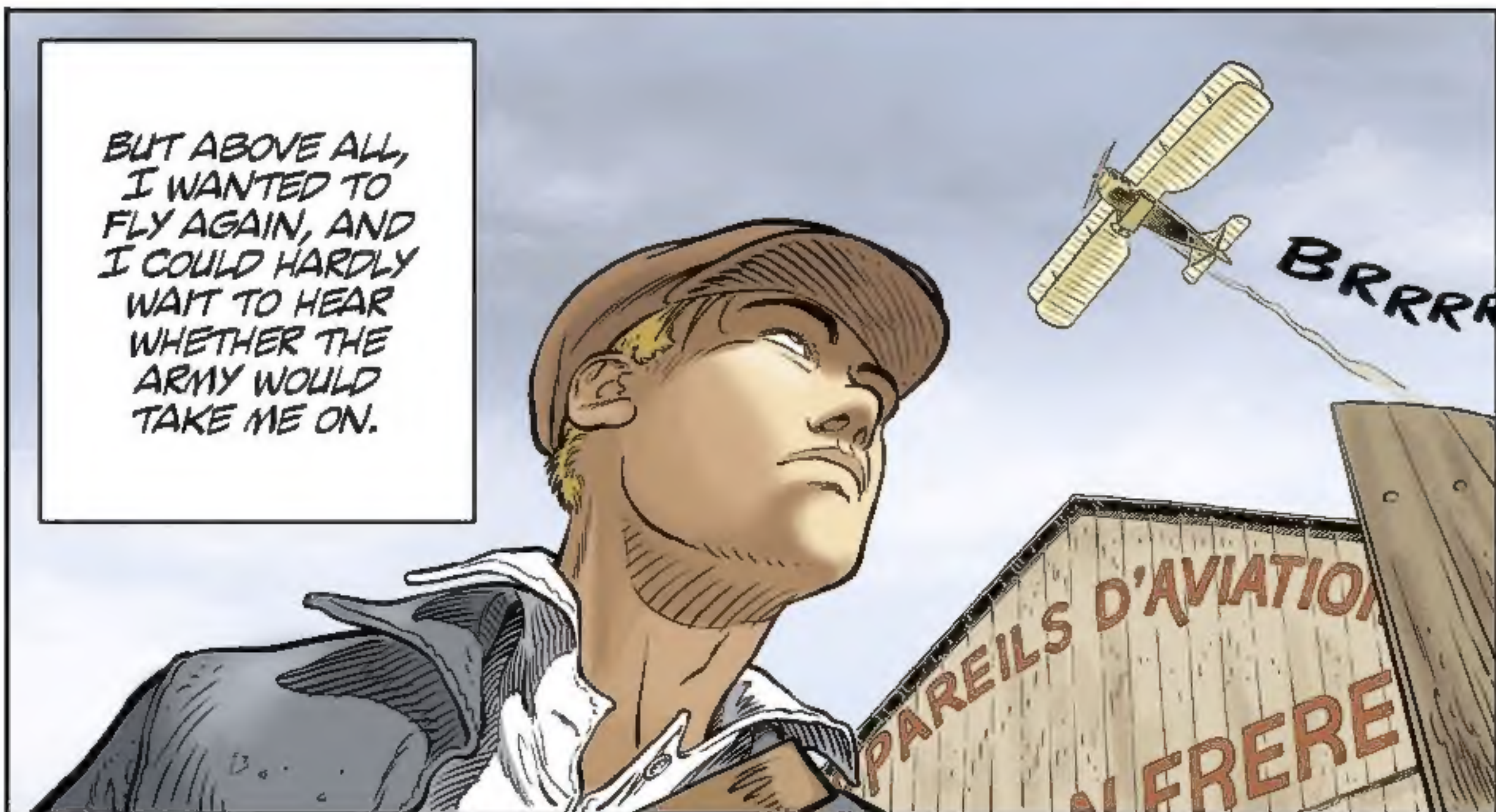


WITH ONLY A FEW CENTS LEFT OVER, I HAD NO HOPE OF PUTTING ASIDE ENOUGH TO PAY FOR MY PILOT'S LICENSE. SO I FINALLY TOOK OSCAR'S ADVICE AND APPLIED FOR A POST IN THE AVIATION DIVISION OF THE ARMY.



I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE MOTHER ALONE TO LOOK AFTER ALL MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, BUT I'D EARN MORE THAN I DID AS AN APPRENTICE JOINER, SO I'D BE ABLE TO PAY HER MORE.

BUT ABOVE ALL, I WANTED TO FLY AGAIN, AND I COULD HARDLY WAIT TO HEAR WHETHER THE ARMY WOULD TAKE ME ON.



MEANWHILE, MOSES'S BEHAVIOR WAS GETTING WORSE, AND I WAS WORRIED ABOUT LEAVING HIM. MOTHER COULDN'T CONTROL HIM ANYMORE.



TAKE ME TO A REAL RESTAURANT ON SATURDAY, HM, CARISSIMO?

I WILL, ROSA!

CIAO!



YOU DON'T KISS A GIRL ON THE LIPS IN PUBLIC, MOSES! THAT'S NO WAY TO BEHAVE! DIDN'T YOU SEE, THAT LADY WAS SHOCKED!

?!

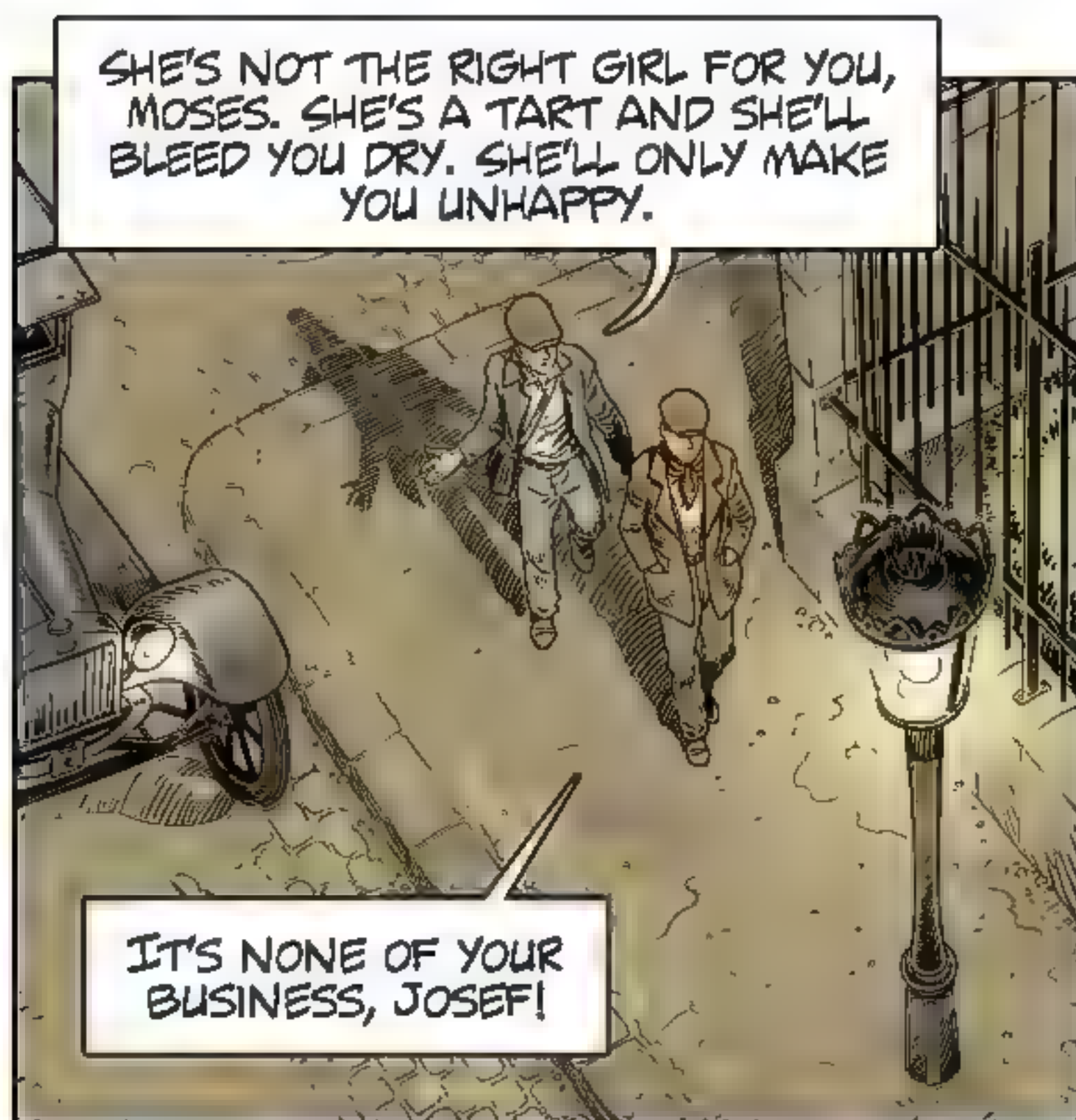


TOO BAD FOR HER.

WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE, ANYHOW? SPYING ON ME...?

I WAS AT THE AIRFIELD.





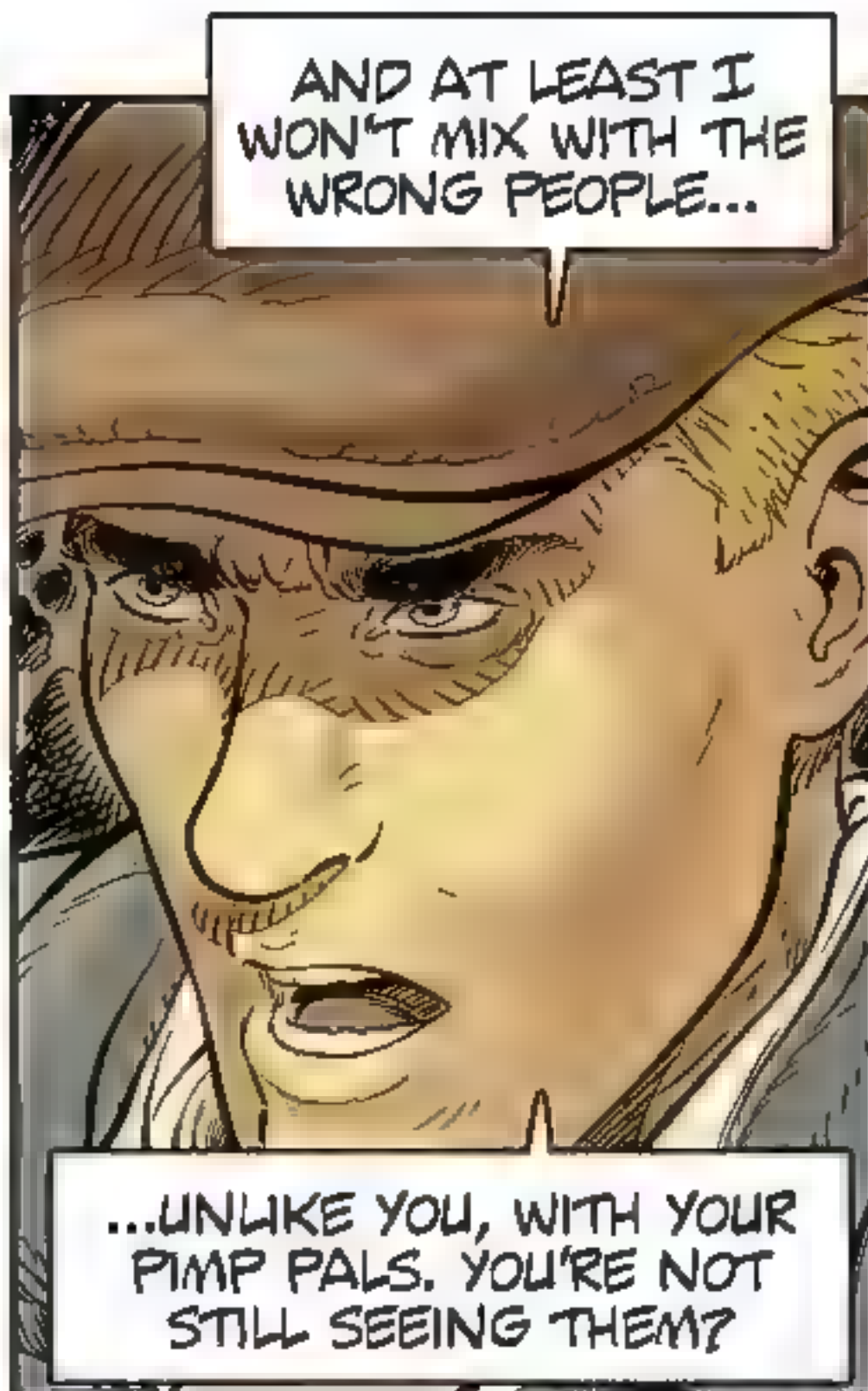
SHE'S NOT THE RIGHT GIRL FOR YOU, MOSES. SHE'S A TART AND SHE'LL BLEED YOU DRY. SHE'LL ONLY MAKE YOU UNHAPPY.

IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, JOSEF!



DO I TELL YOU WHAT TO DO? I SUPPOSE YOU THINK MOTHER'S HAPPY ABOUT YOU GOING OFF TO JOIN THE ARMY? THE FRENCH ARMY, TOO!

WE'RE HALF FRENCH, IN CASE YOU'D FORGOTTEN!



AND AT LEAST I WON'T MIX WITH THE WRONG PEOPLE...

...UNLIKE YOU, WITH YOUR PIMP PALS. YOU'RE NOT STILL SEEING THEM?



?!!

TRUUT

I'LL SEE WHO I WANT, JOSEF!

I'M GROWN-UP AND YOU'RE NOT MY FATHER!

SO LEAVE ME ALONE!

?

THREE WEEKS WENT BY, AND STILL THERE WAS NO REPLY FROM THE ARMY. THE VISCOUNT FAILED HIS TEST, AS EXPECTED, AND MOSES AND I DIDN'T TALK ABOUT ROSA AGAIN. IN FACT, WE HARDLY TALKED AT ALL.



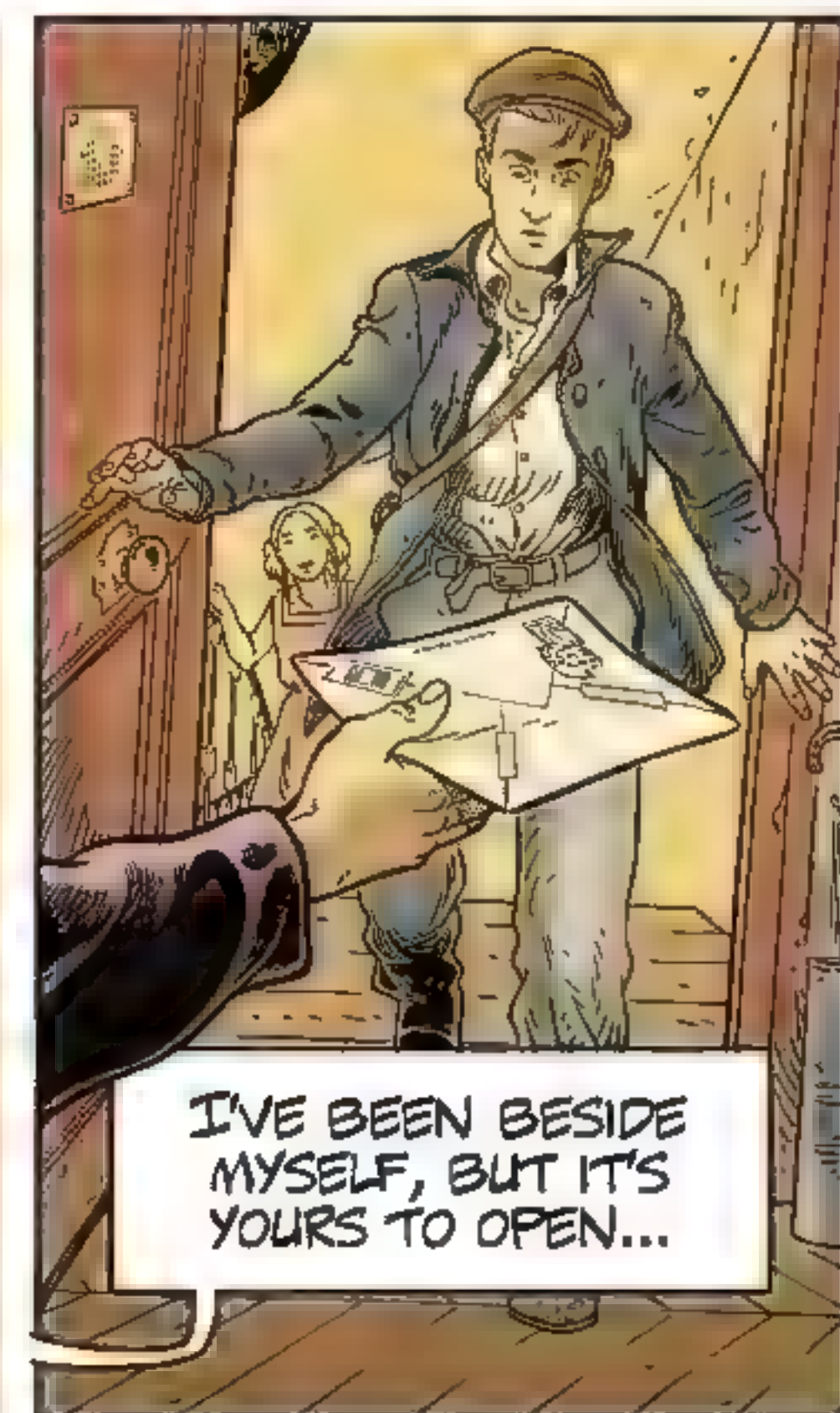
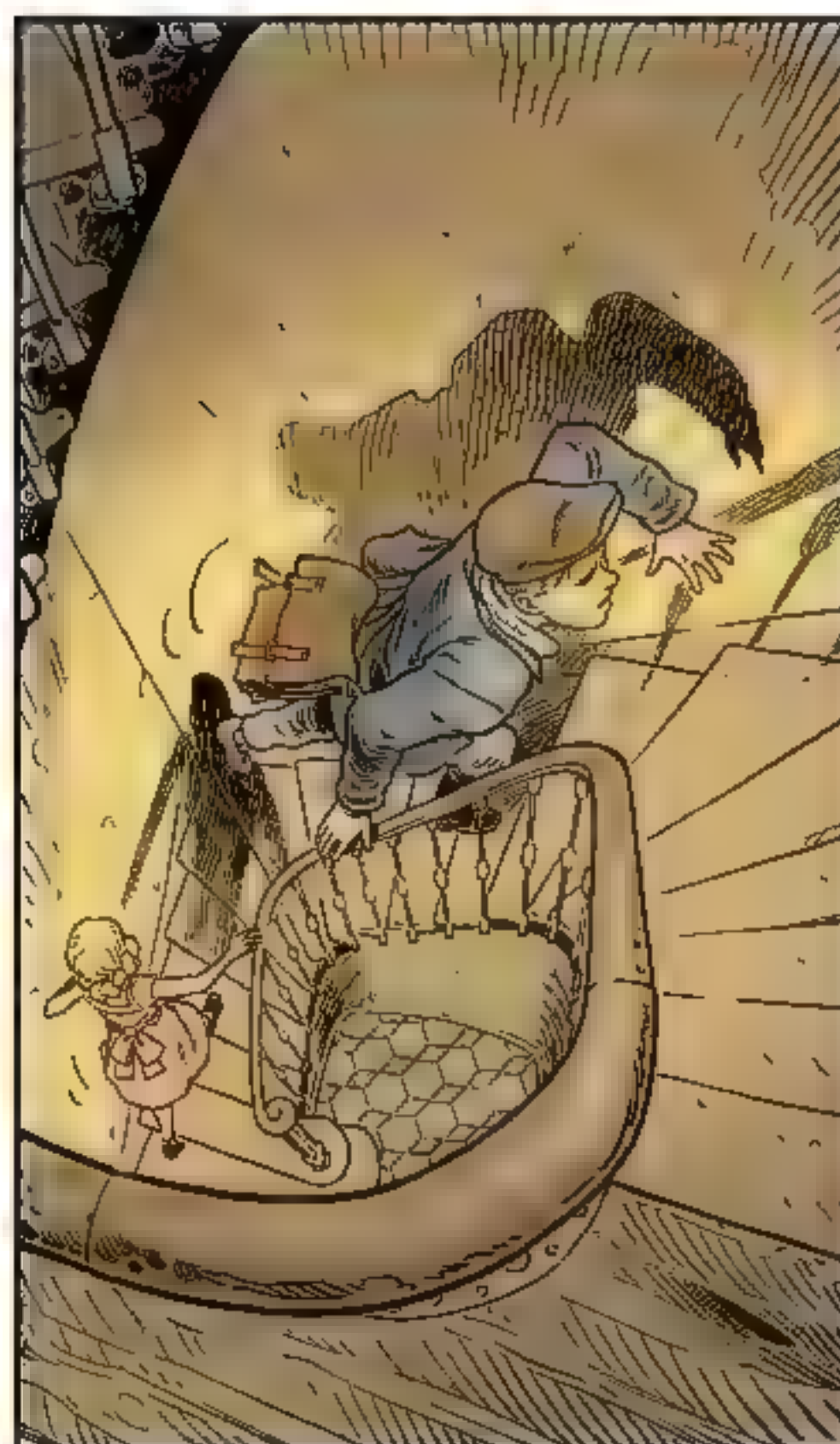
ONE DAY--AND I REMEMBER IT WELL--HE HADN'T TURNED UP AT THE FACTORY, AND I WAS DETERMINED TO FIND OUT WHY...



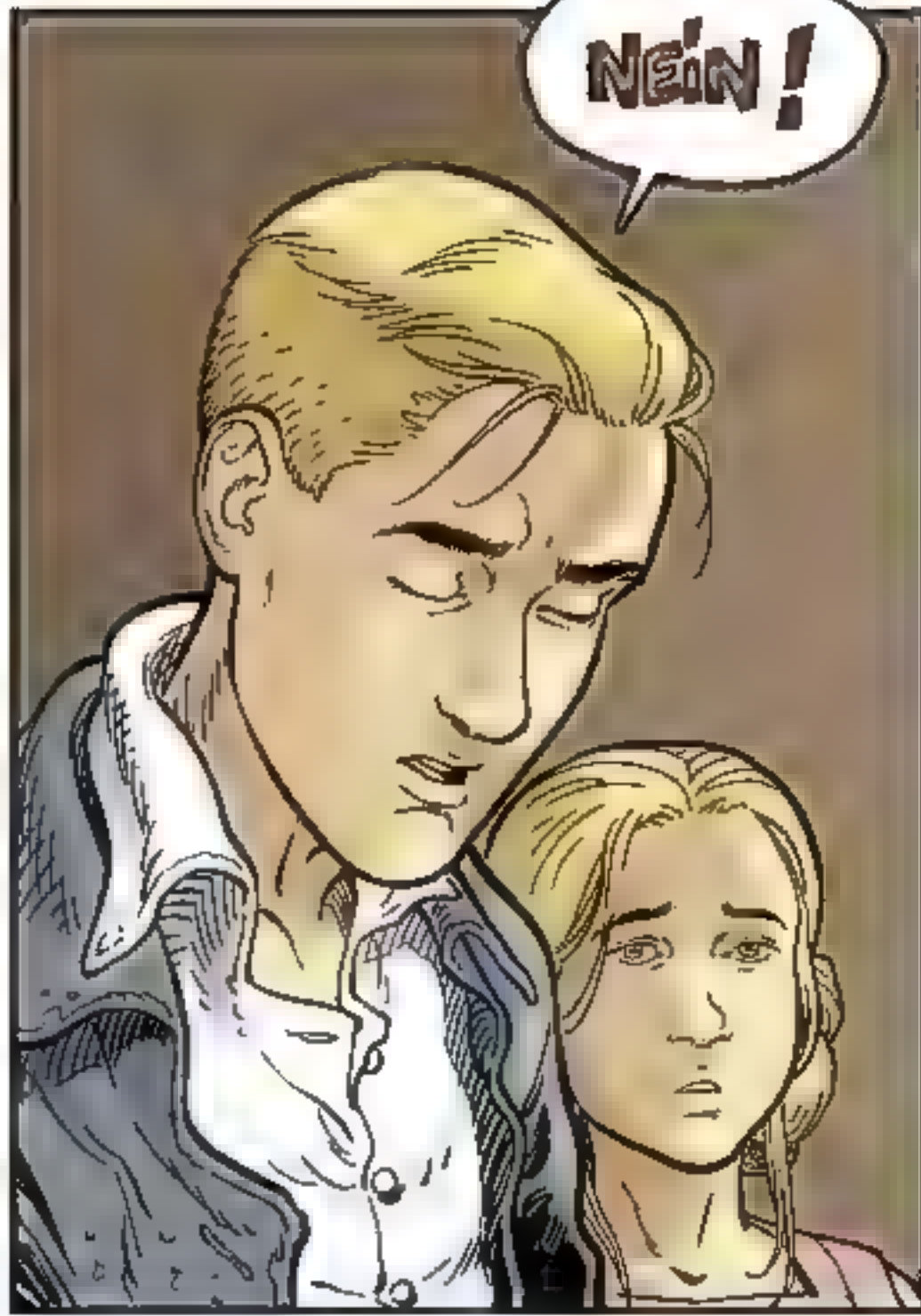
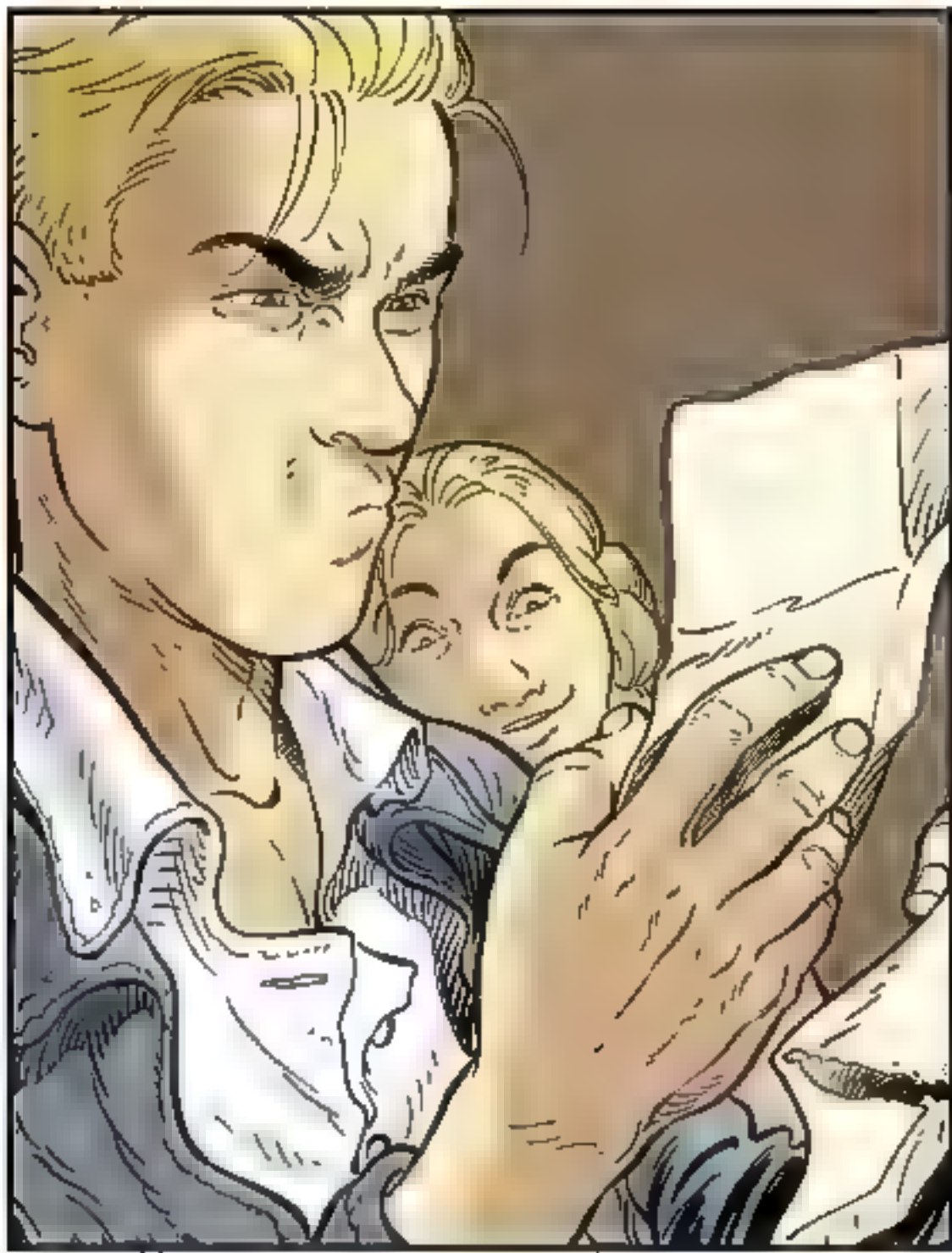
COME QUICK, JOSEF!

THERE'S A LETTER FOR YOU, WITH A RED, WHITE, AND BLUE FLAG ON IT. MOTHER'S WAITING FOR YOU!

?



I'VE BEEN BESIDE MYSELF, BUT IT'S YOURS TO OPEN...

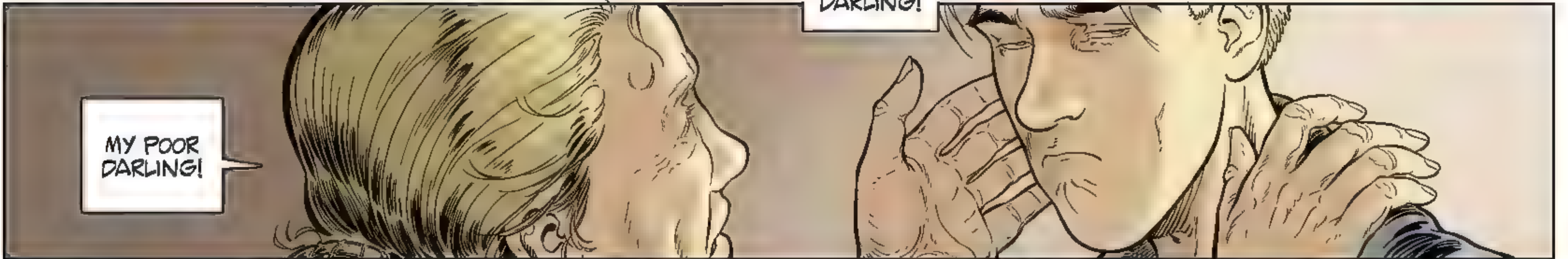


NEIN!

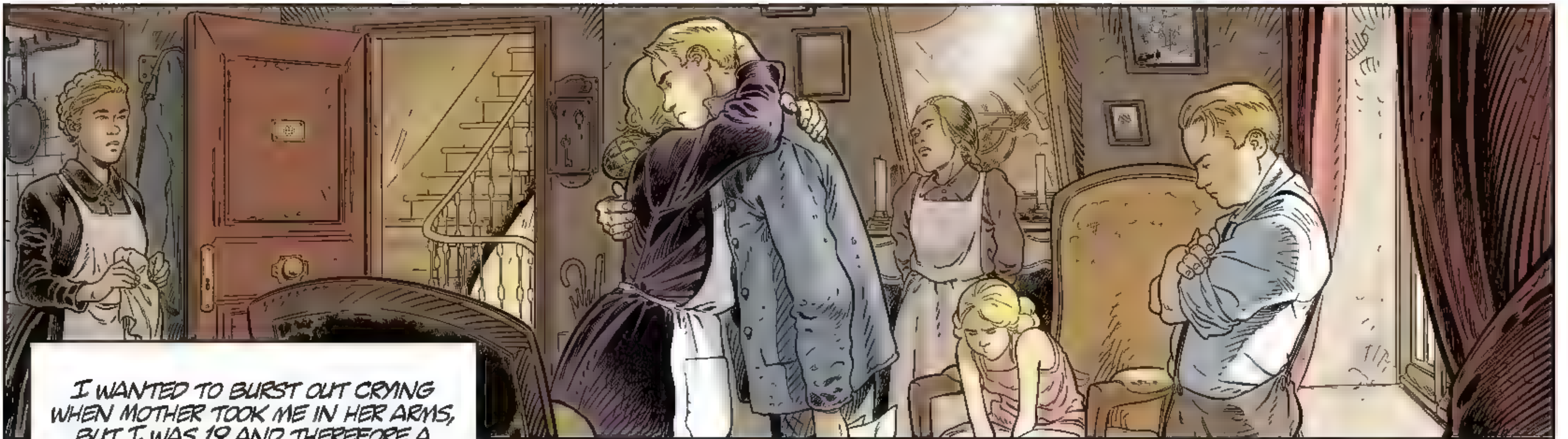


I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT THEY GOT HOLD OF RECORDS THAT SHOW I WAS JAILED BY THE TOMMIES. THAT I FOUGHT FOR THE GERMANS. SO THERE'S NO QUESTION OF MY JOINING THE FRENCH ARMY...

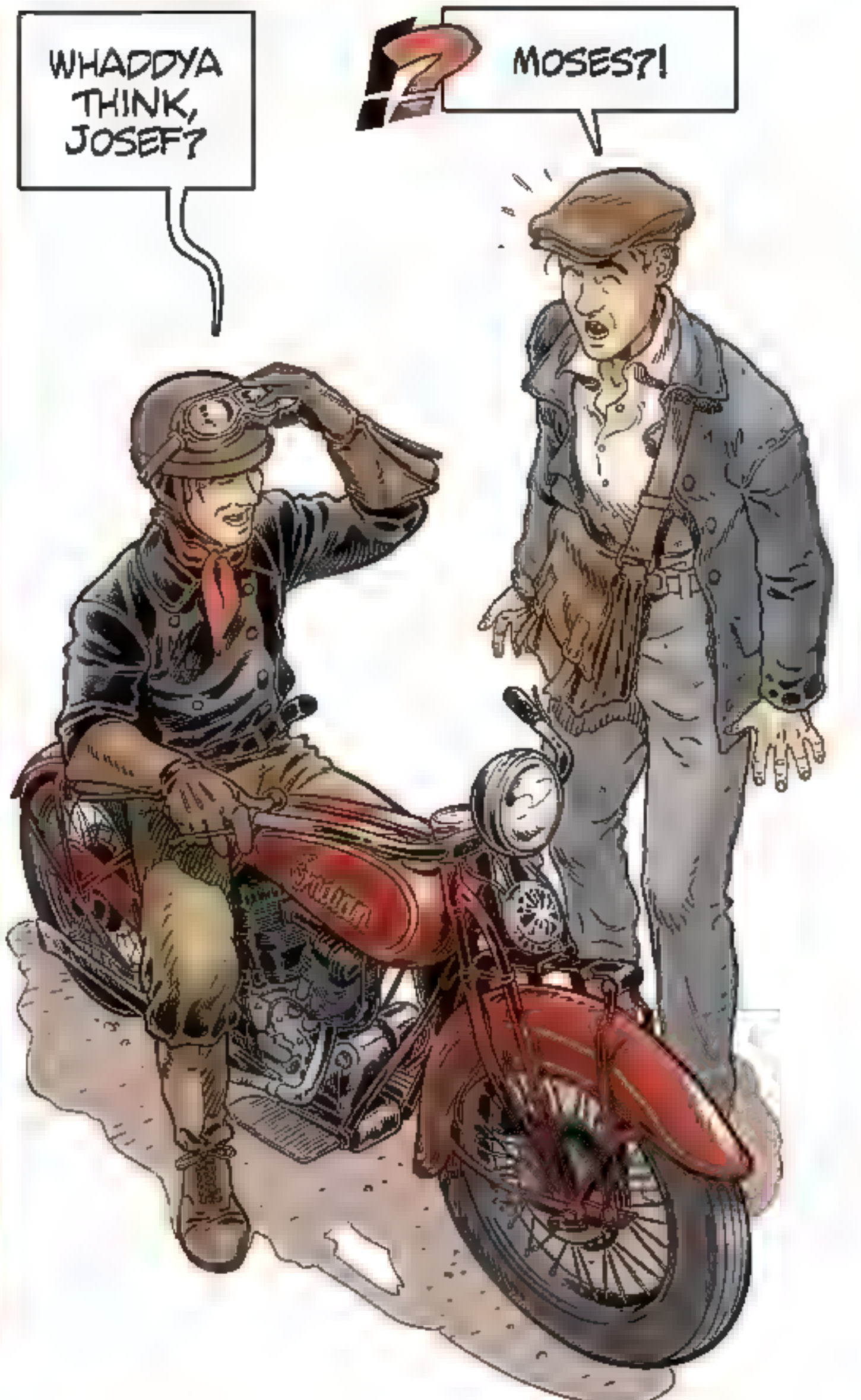
MY DARLING!



MY POOR DARLING!

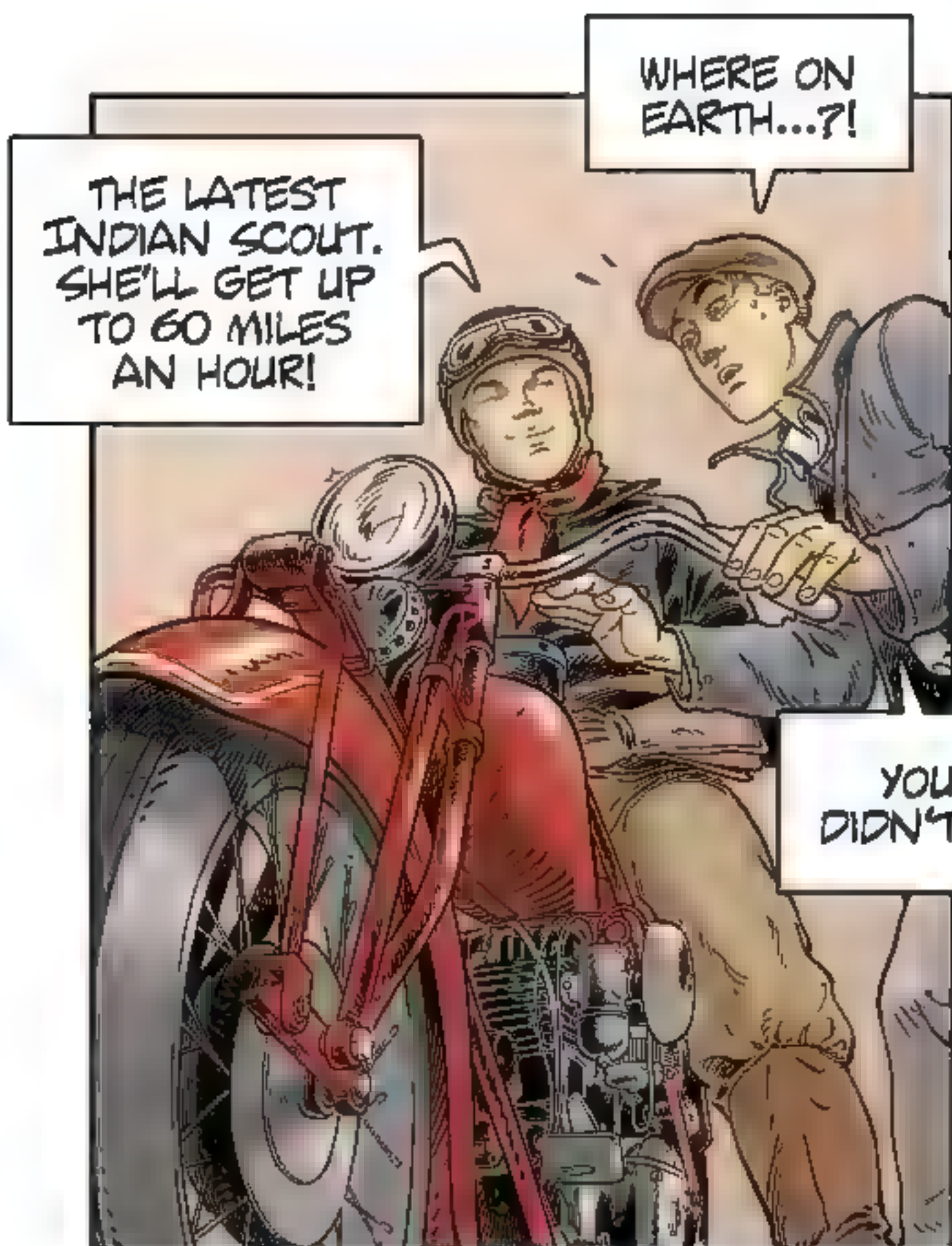


I WANTED TO BURST OUT CRYING WHEN MOTHER TOOK ME IN HER ARMS, BUT I WAS 19 AND THEREFORE A MAN, AND "MEN DON'T CRY." HOW MANY TIMES HAD I HEARD MY FATHER TROT OUT THAT LITTLE DICTUM?



WHADDYA THINK, JOSEF?

MOSES?!?



THE LATEST INDIAN SCOUT. SHE'LL GET UP TO 60 MILES AN HOUR!

WHERE ON EARTH...?!

YOU DIDN'T--



STEAL IT?
HA! HA!

NO! IT'S FOR MY NEW JOB!



I'M LEAVING THE FACTORY, JOSEF. WITH THIS, I'M GONNA EARN STACKS!

WITH THAT? BUT HOW?

DELIVERING THINGS FOR IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN THE CITY!

LIKE WHAT?

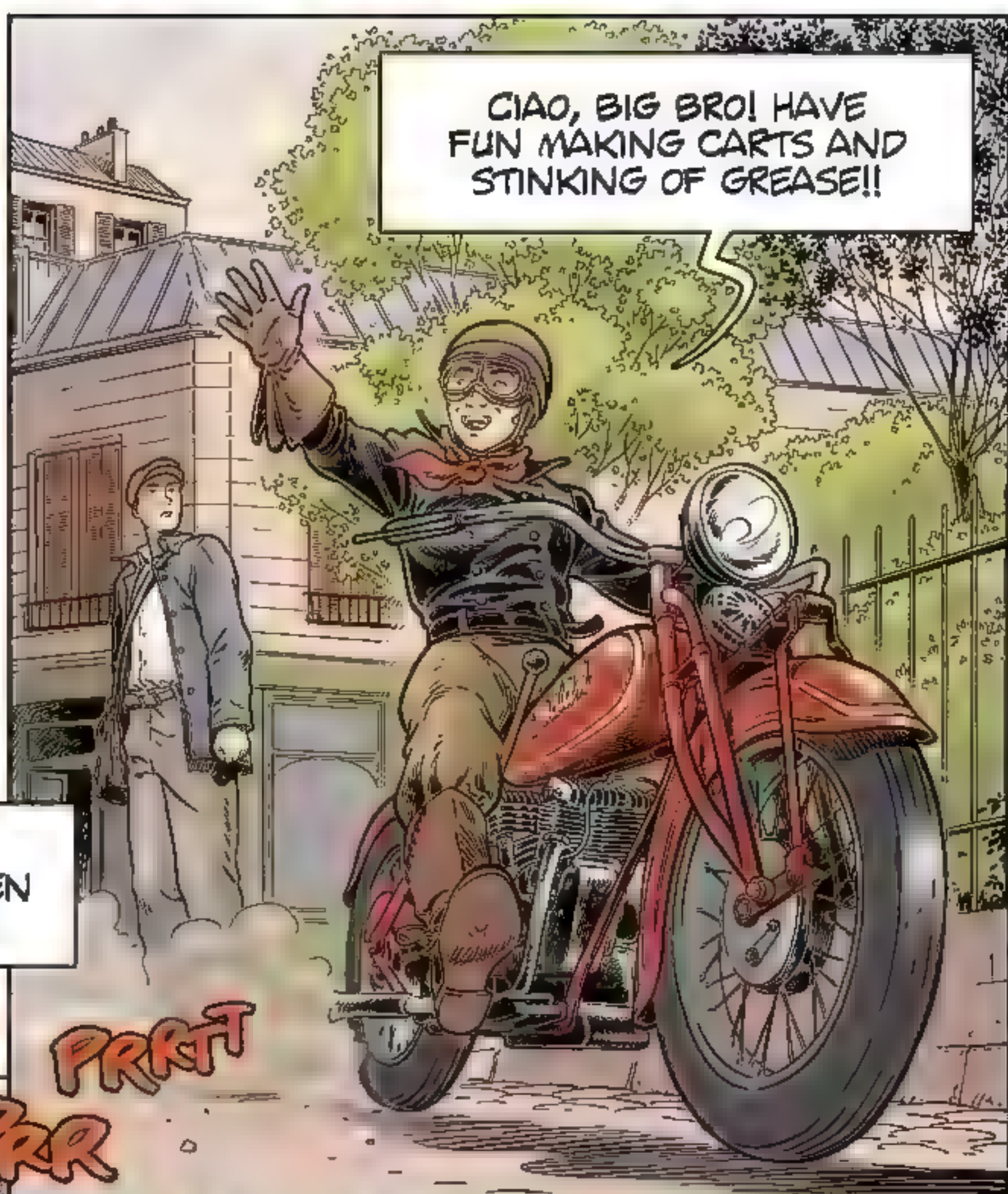


LETTERS, PARCELS... FOR BUSINESS PEOPLE AND POLITICIANS. PEOPLE WHO WANT THINGS DONE FAST, NO QUESTIONS ASKED. A KIND OF PRIVATE MAIL SERVICE!

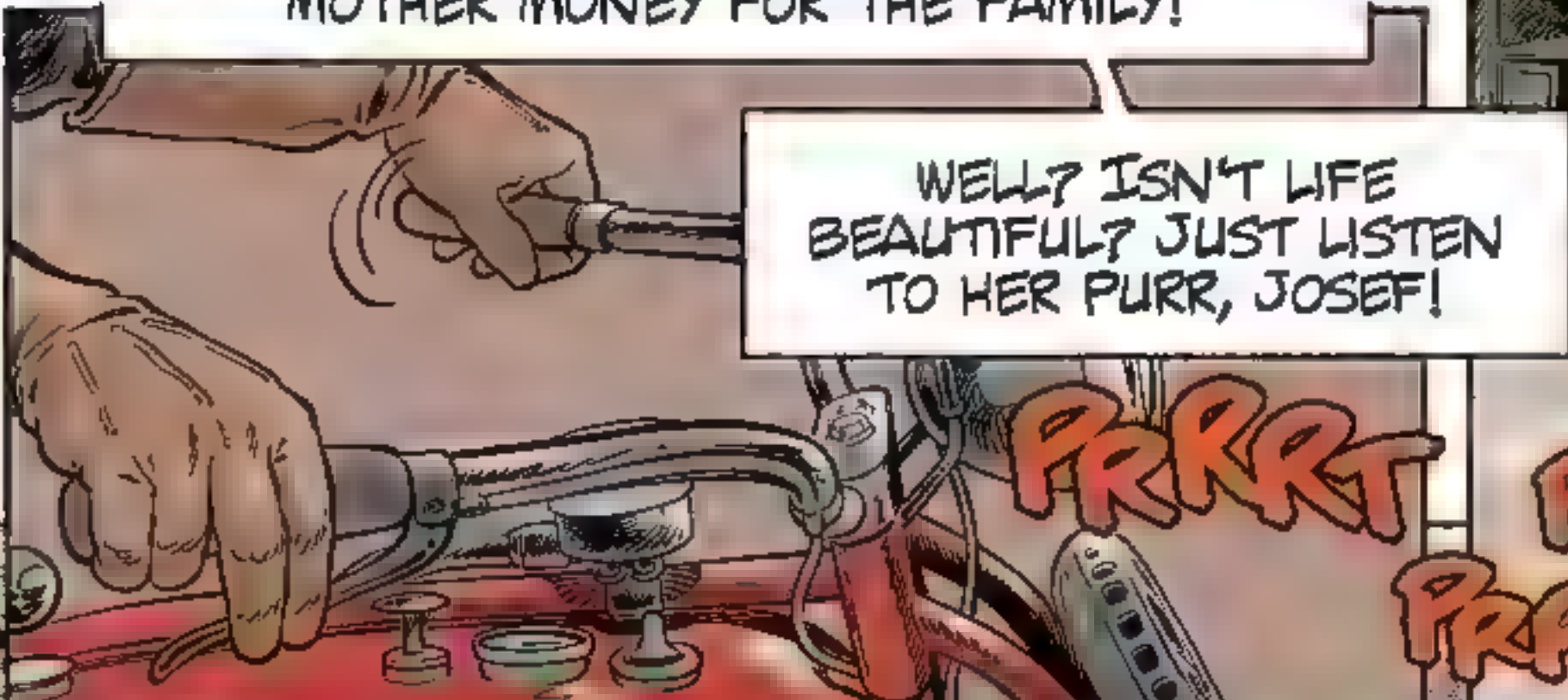


OH, AND NOW THAT I THINK OF IT... I'M ALSO LEAVING OUR APARTMENT TO GO LIVE WITH ROSA!

BUT DON'T WORRY, I'LL STILL GIVE MOTHER MONEY FOR THE FAMILY!

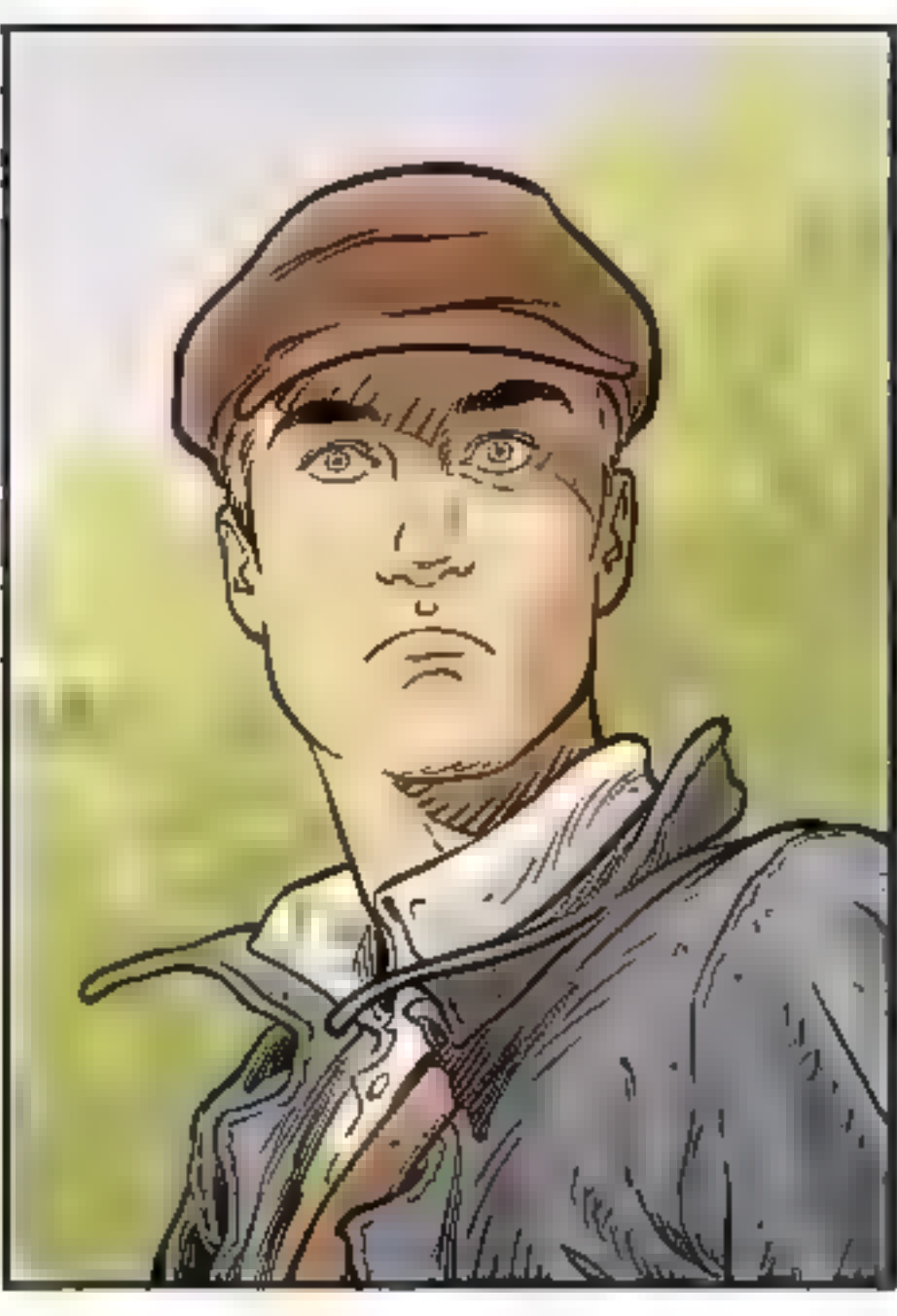


CIAO, BIG BRO! HAVE FUN MAKING CARTS AND STINKING OF GREASE!!



WELL? ISN'T LIFE BEAUTIFUL? JUST LISTEN TO HER PURR, JOSEF!

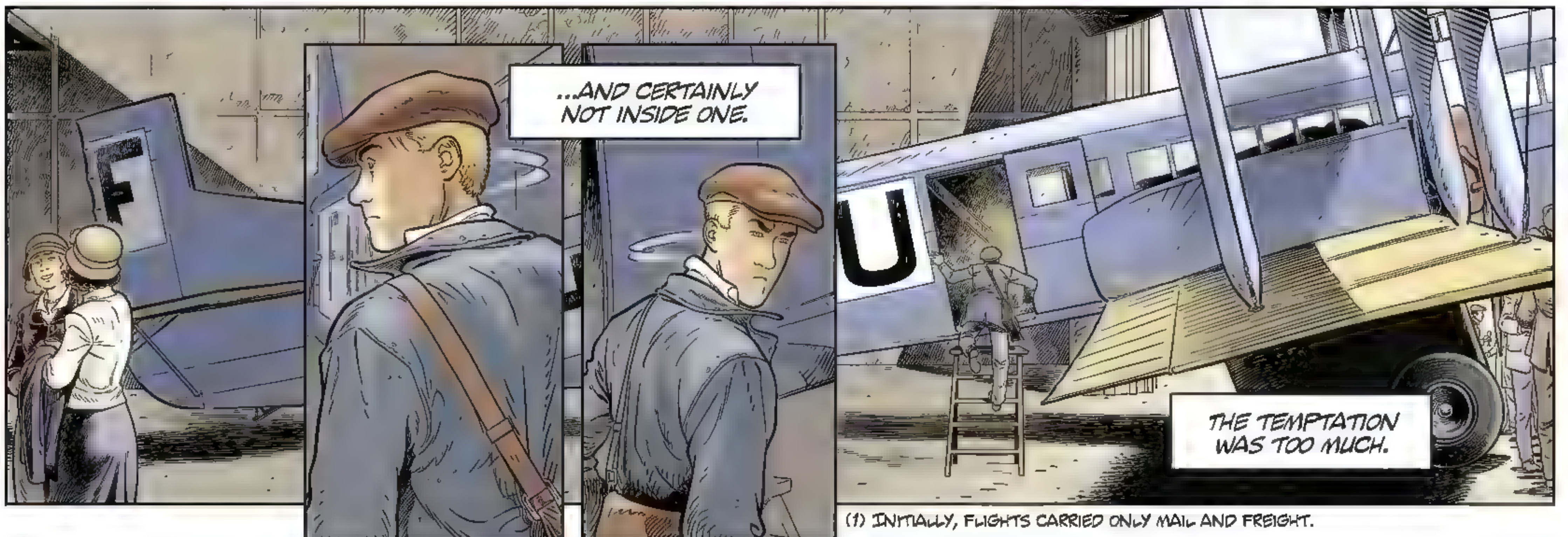
PRRRRT PRRRT PRR



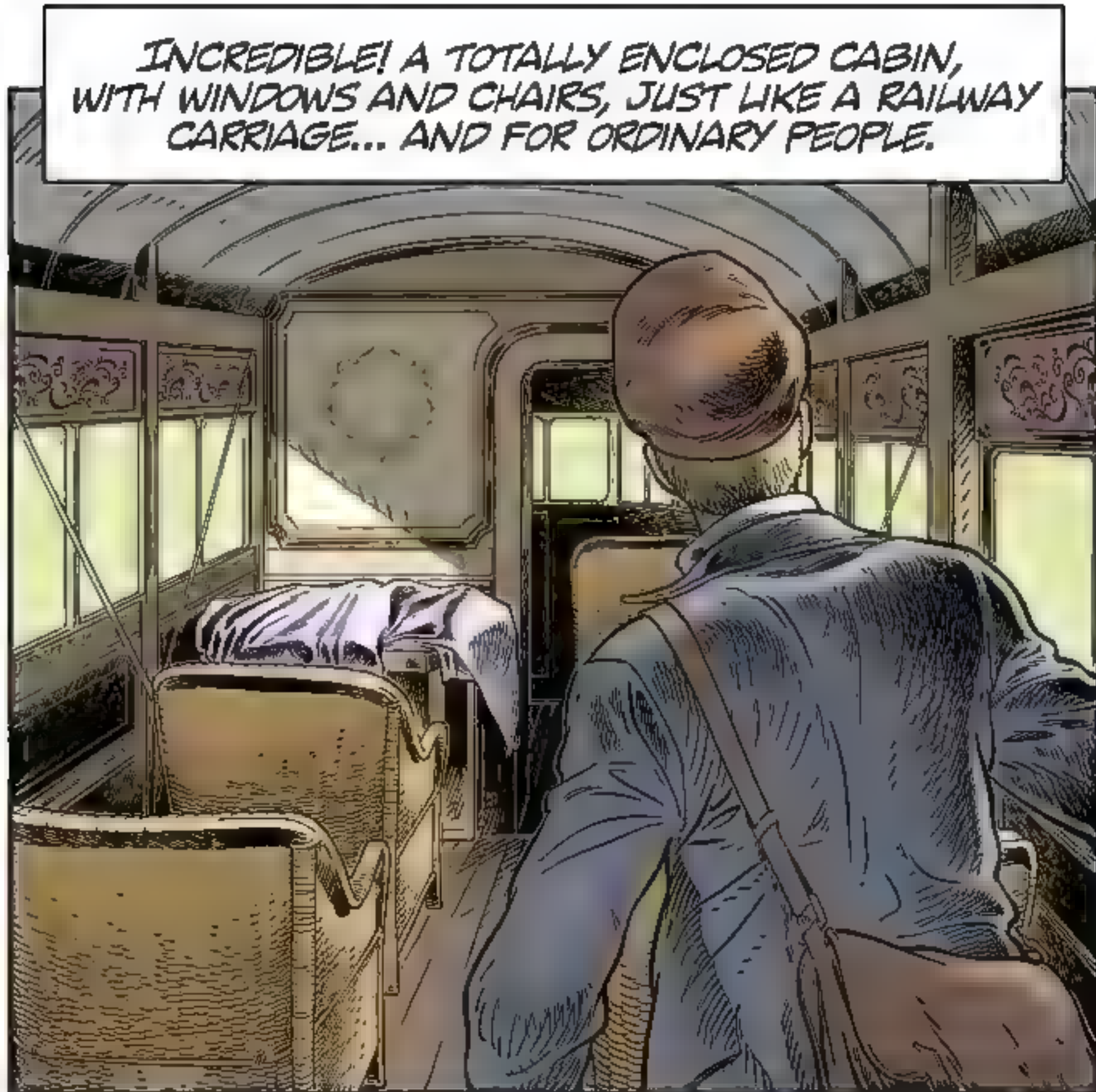
I WAS SHOCKED, YET I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO BE ANGRY WITH MOSES. STRANGELY, HE'D SNAPPED ME OUT OF THE DEEP DEPRESSION I'D BEEN IN SINCE I'D GOTTEN THAT LETTER.



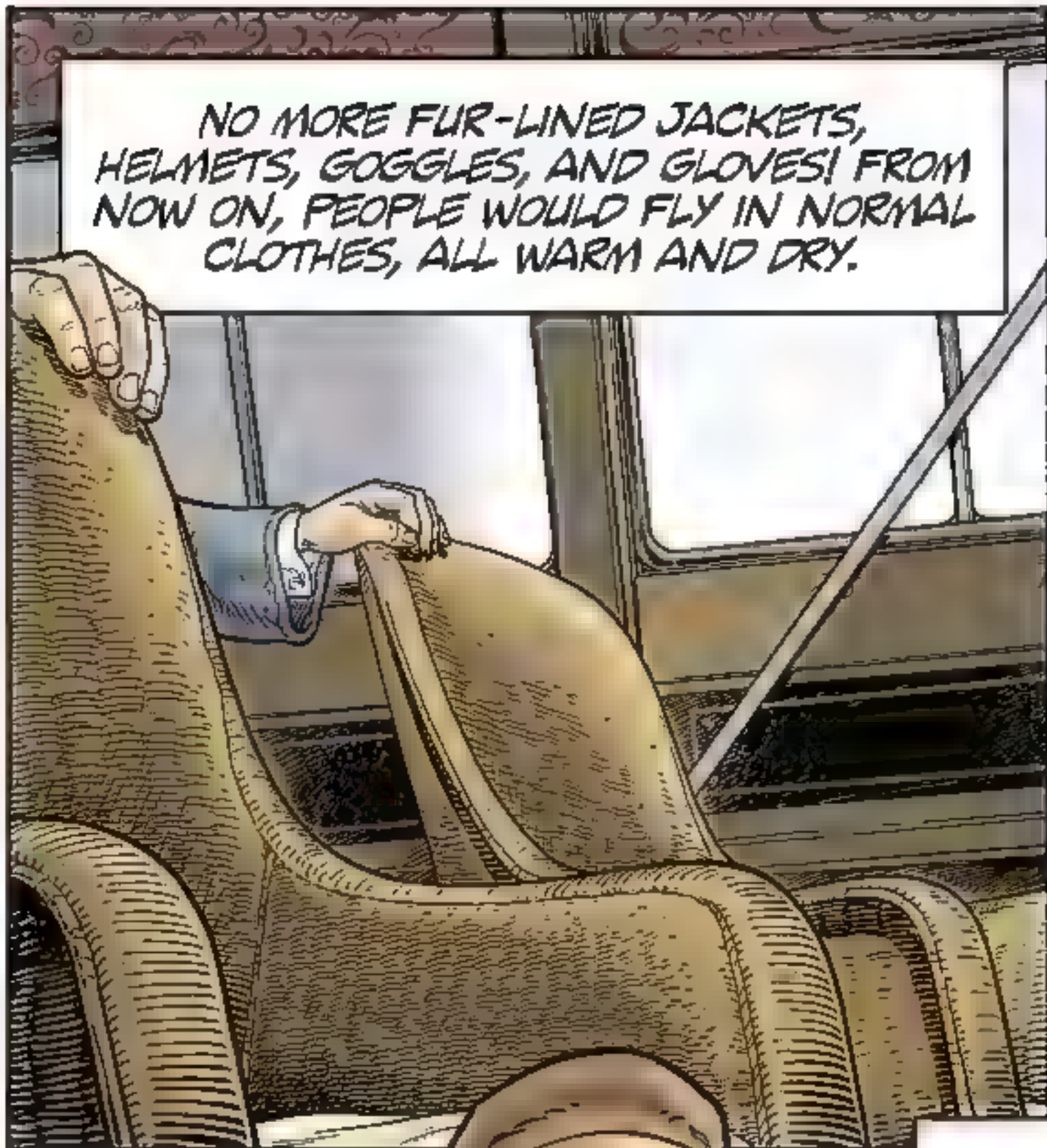
IF I WANTED TO BE A PILOT, I HAD TO FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE AND TAKE ACTION. SO I TURNED AWAY FROM THE FACTORY AND HEADED TOWARD THE AIRFIELD.



(1) INITIALLY, FLIGHTS CARRIED ONLY MAIL AND FREIGHT.



INCREDIBLE! A TOTALLY ENCLOSED CABIN, WITH WINDOWS AND CHAIRS, JUST LIKE A RAILWAY CARRIAGE... AND FOR ORDINARY PEOPLE.

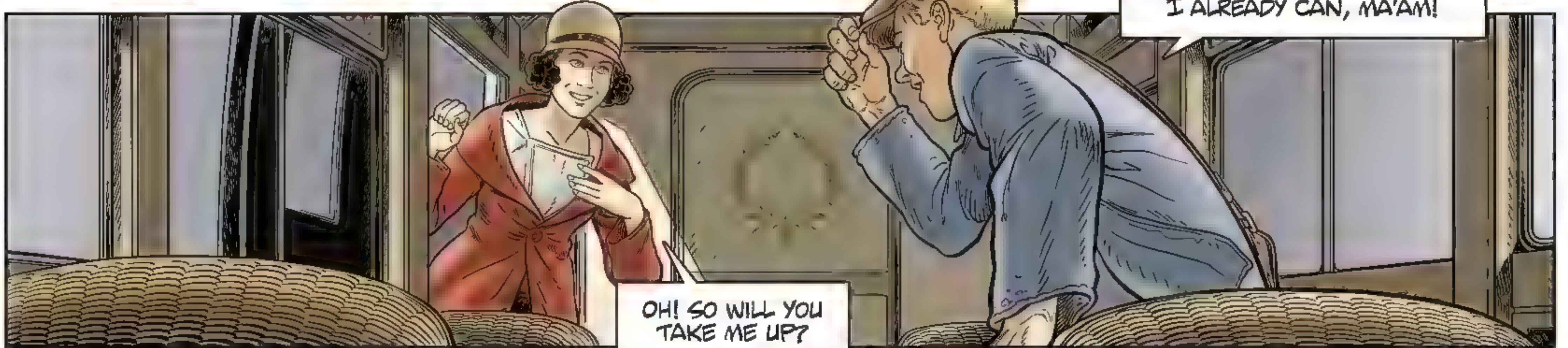


NO MORE FUR-LINED JACKETS, HELMETS, GOGGLES, AND GLOVES! FROM NOW ON, PEOPLE WOULD FLY IN NORMAL CLOTHES, ALL WARM AND DRY.



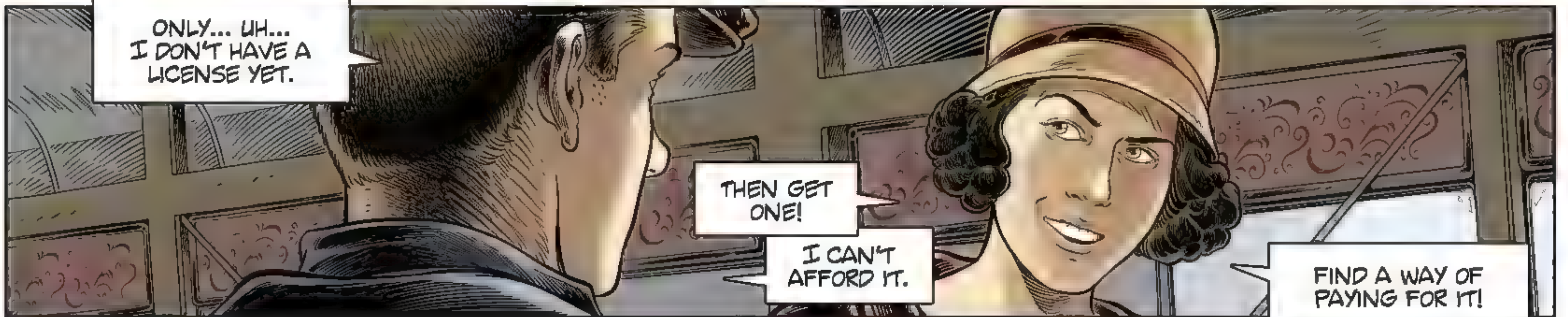
YOU'D LIKE TO FLY PLANES, AM I RIGHT?

?!



I ALREADY CAN, MA'AM!

OH! SO WILL YOU TAKE ME UP?



ONLY... UH... I DON'T HAVE A LICENSE YET.

THEN GET ONE!

I CAN'T AFFORD IT.

FIND A WAY OF PAYING FOR IT!



THAT'S EASY TO SAY, MA'AM! IT MIGHT BE SIMPLER IF I JUST DID WHAT ADRIENNE BOLLAND DID--A COUPLE OF LOOP-THE-LOOPS FOR MR. CAUDRON (1) SO HE'D LET ME FLY FOR HIM...

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU KNOW HIM, DO YOU?



WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

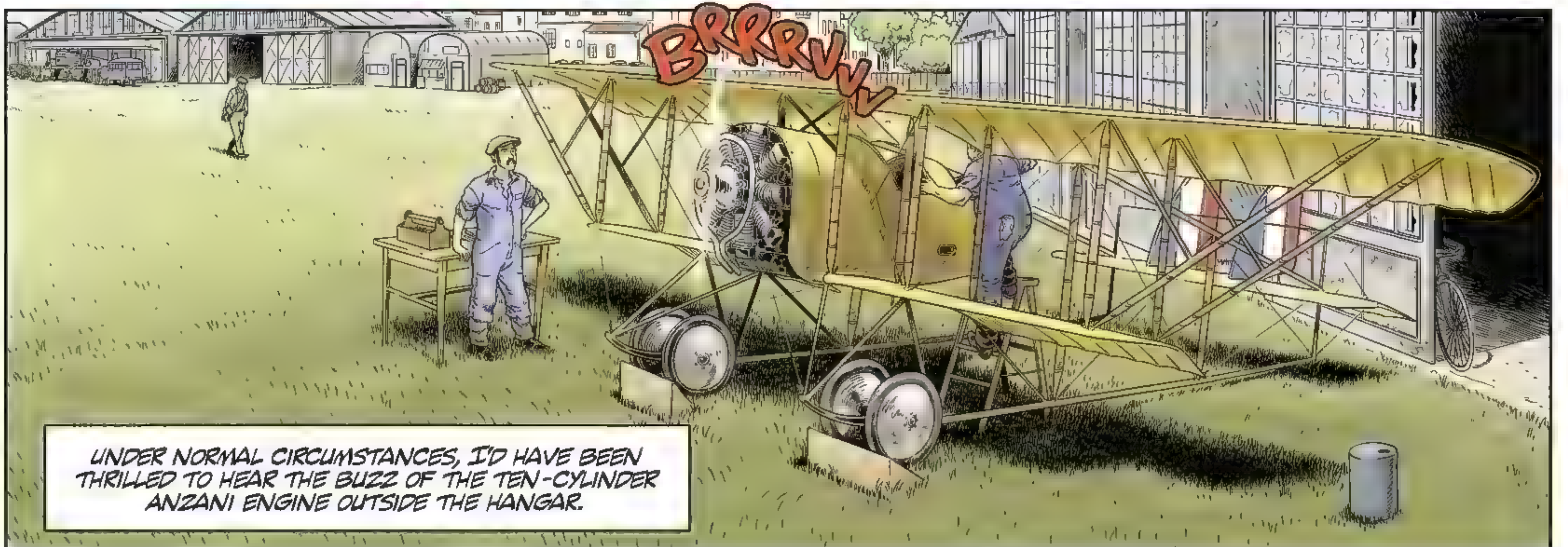
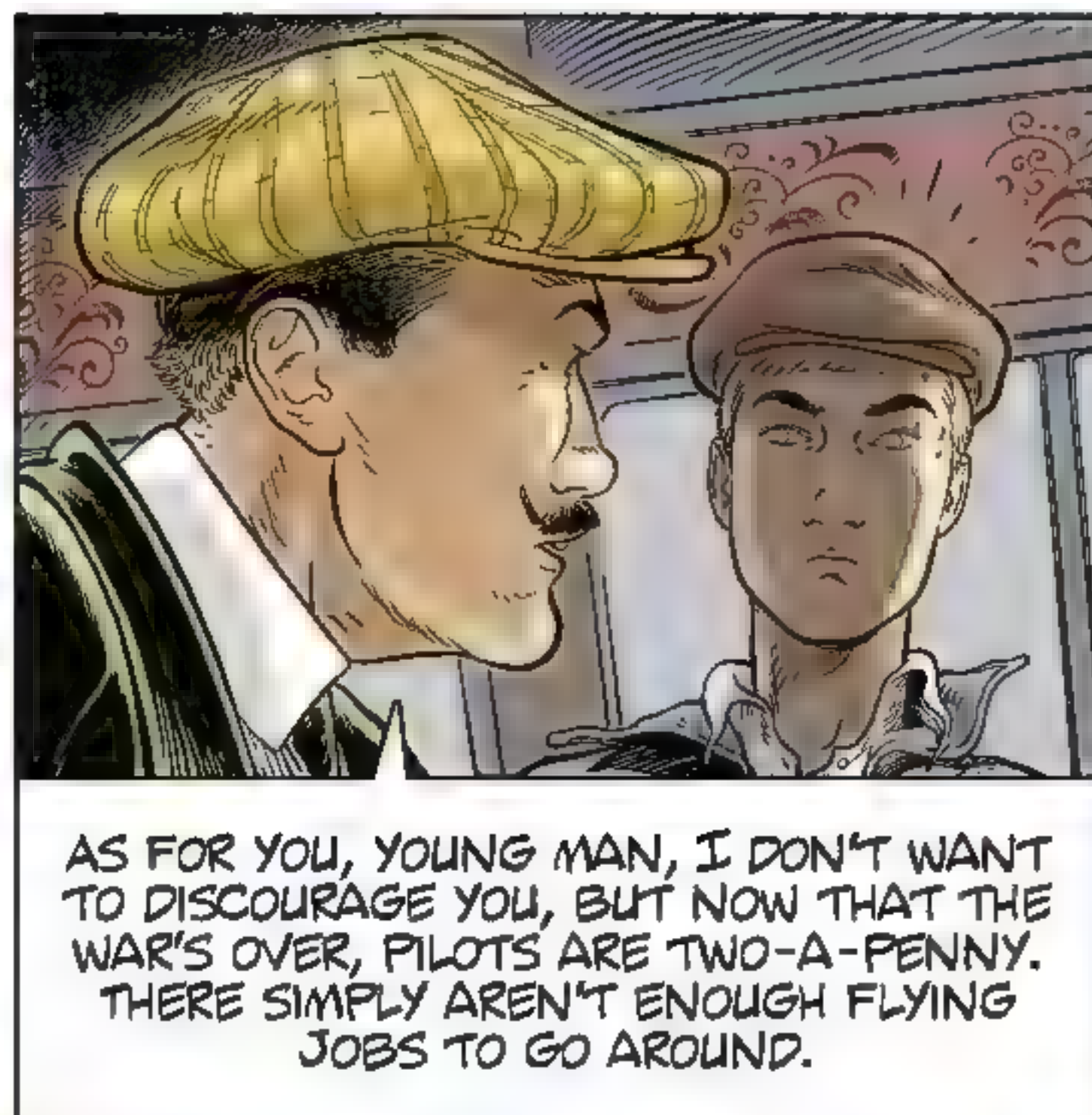
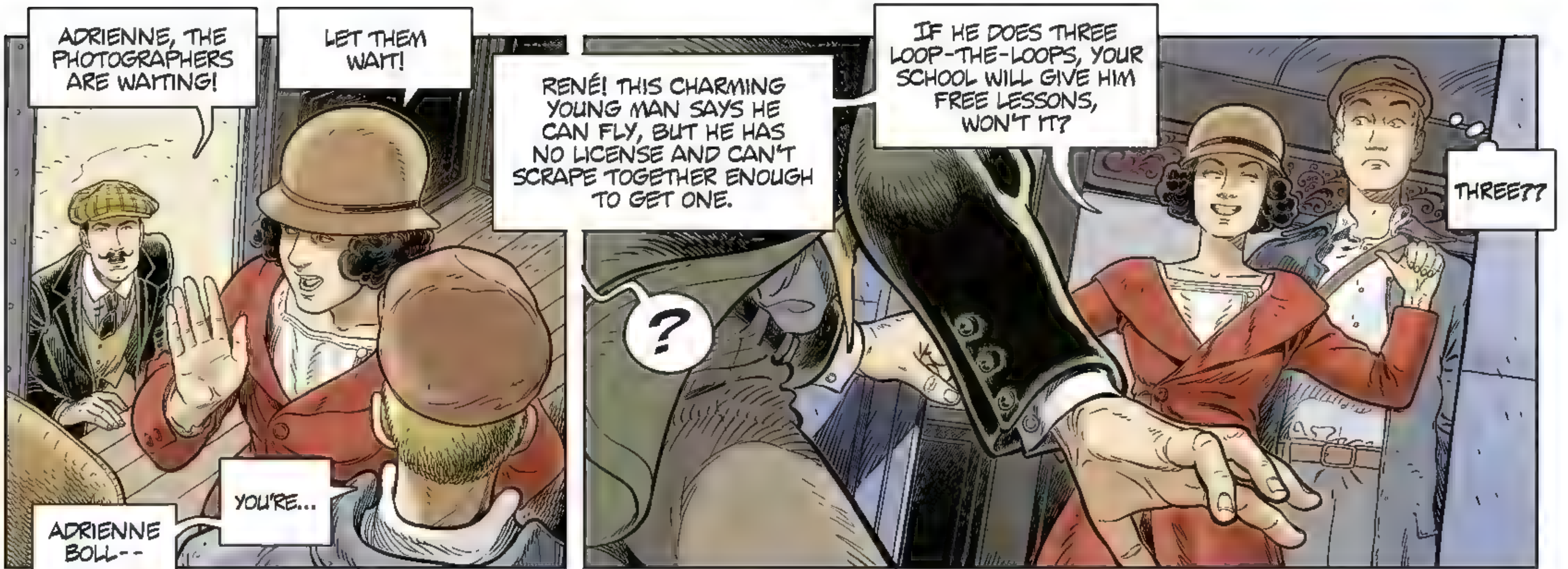
UH... JOSEF, MA'AM.



WELL, JOSEF, ALLOW ME TO CORRECT YOU. MR. CAUDRON TOOK ME ON BECAUSE I'M A WOMAN. HE KNEW IT WOULD BE GOOD PUBLICITY. CLEVER OF HIM, HUH?

??

(1) FRANCE'S FIRST FEMALE PILOT, BOLLAND EARNED HER OWN CAUDRON PLANE FOR THE STUNT.





RIGHT NOW, I WAS ASTONISHED.
WHY WAS THE G.3 OUTSIDE?

JOSEF?!

NOT PLANING
PLANKS TODAY?

NO!

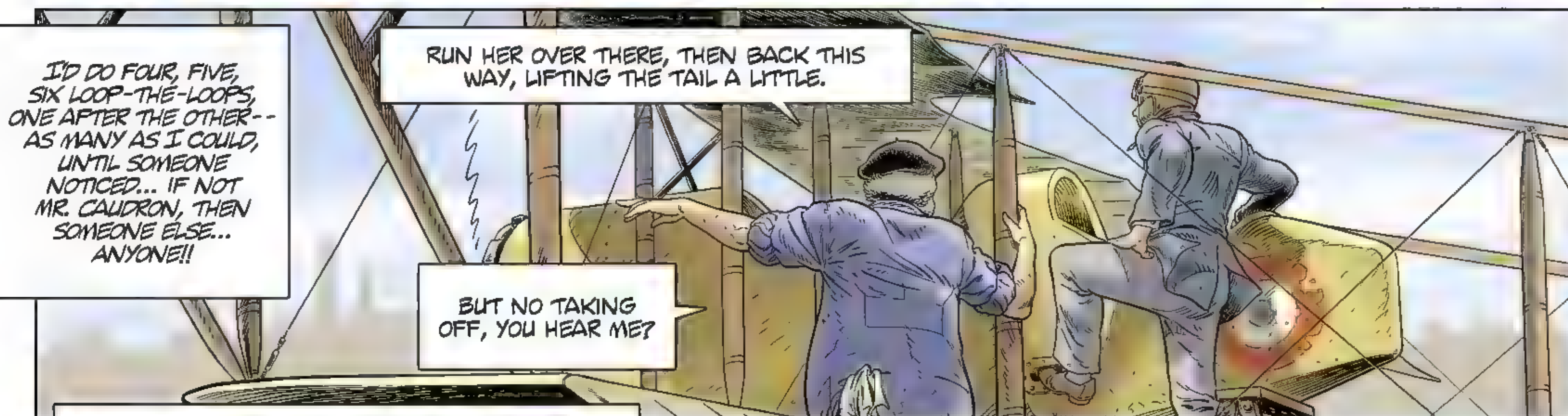


WHAT'S THAT FACE FOR?
I WAS PLANNING ON TAKING
HER FOR A RUN AROUND THE
FIELD, BUT IF YOU WANT,
YOU CAN DO IT FOR ME...



WAS FATE GIVING ME A SIGN? I'D
ALREADY STOPPED LISTENING. STILL
UPSET, I'D MADE UP MY MIND.

BUT LISTEN, JOSEF!
JUST A FEW GENTLE
MOVEMENTS TO CHECK
THAT THE RUDDER AND
THE AILERONS ARE
WORKING, OK?

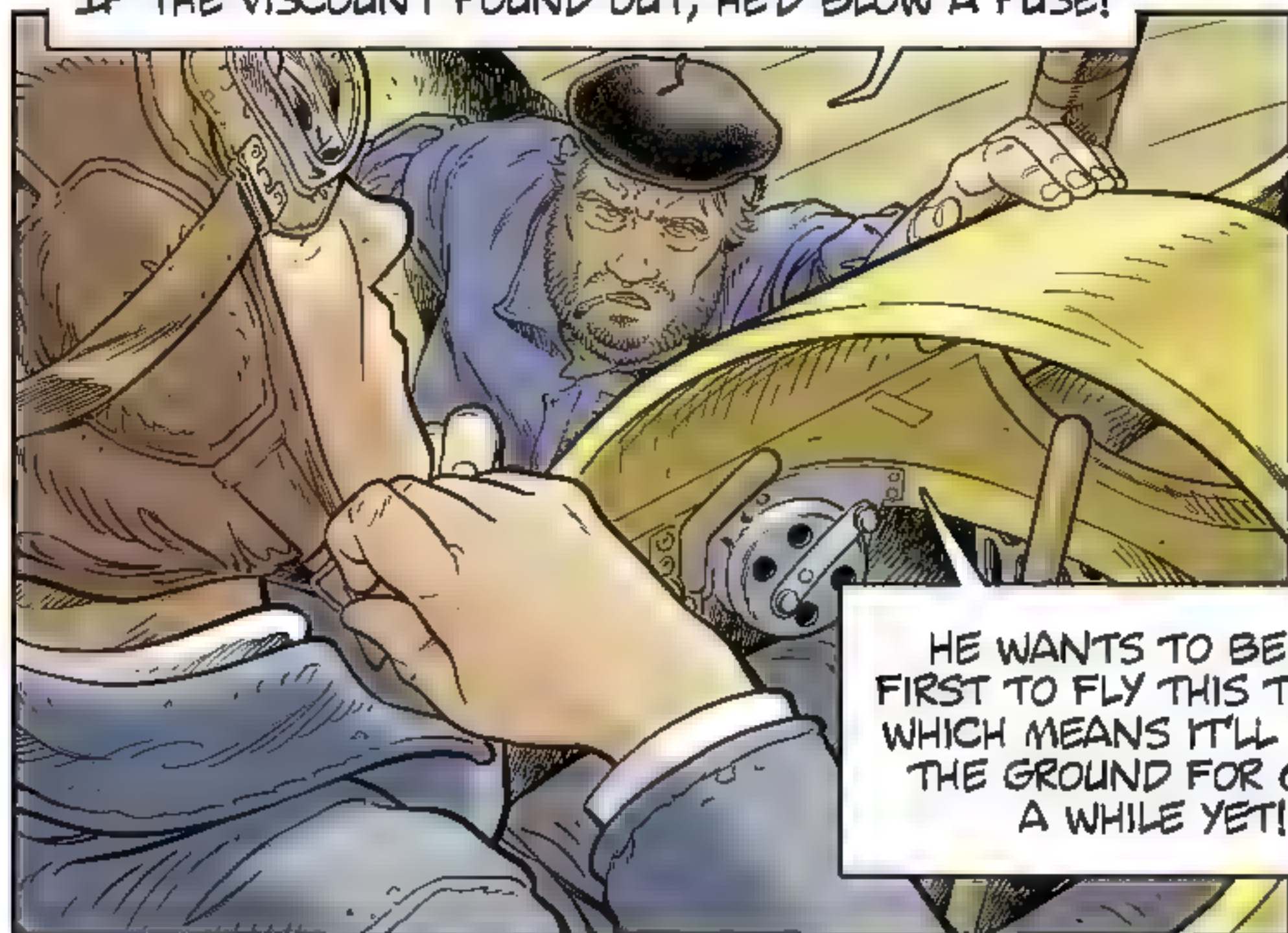


I'D DO FOUR, FIVE,
SIX LOOP-THE-LOOPS,
ONE AFTER THE OTHER--
AS MANY AS I COULD,
UNTIL SOMEONE
NOTICED... IF NOT
MR. CAUDRON, THEN
SOMEONE ELSE...
ANYONE!!

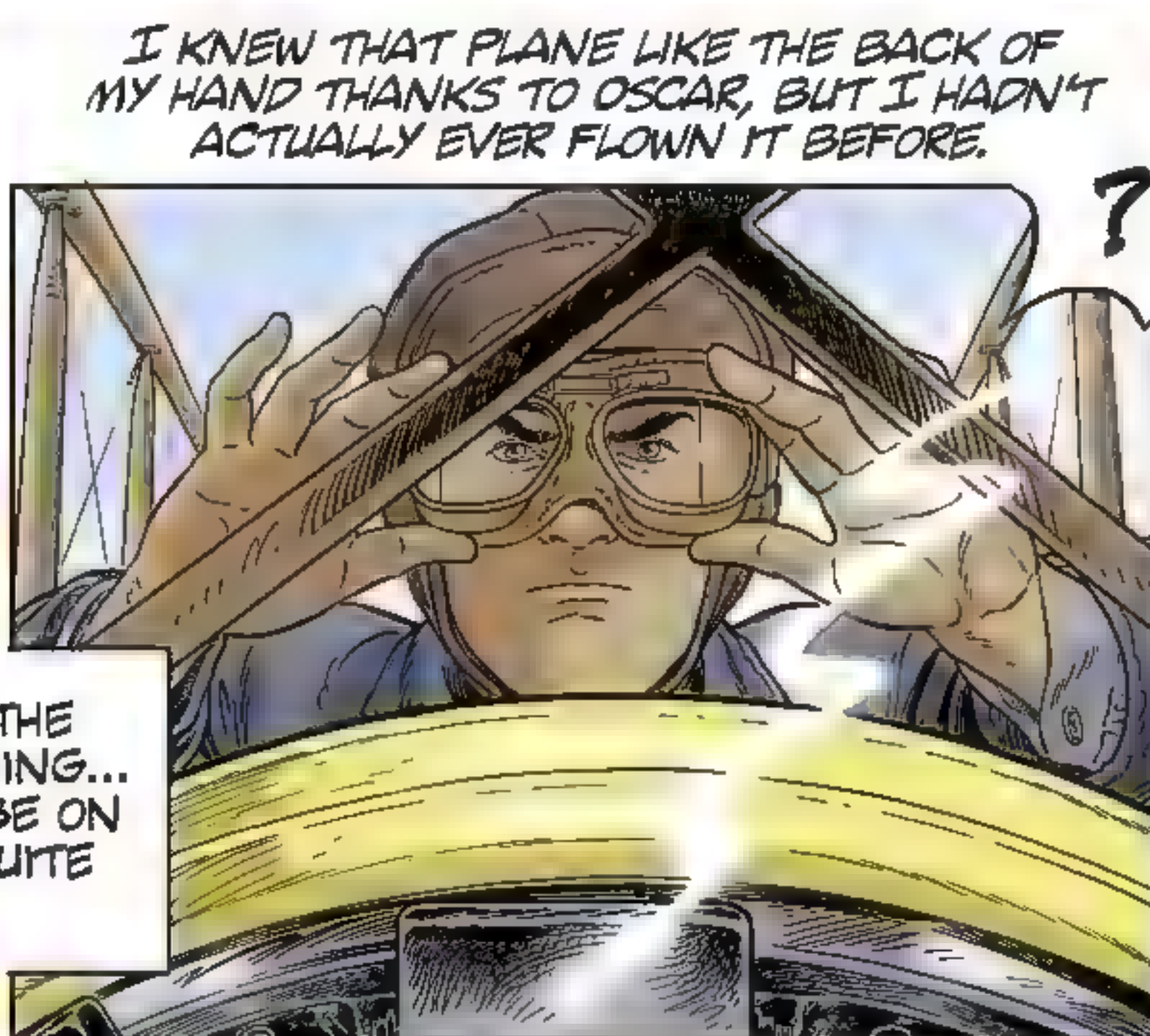
RUN HER OVER THERE, THEN BACK THIS
WAY, LIFTING THE TAIL A LITTLE.

BUT NO TAKING
OFF, YOU HEAR ME?

IF THE VISCOUNT FOUND OUT, HE'D BLOW A FUSE!



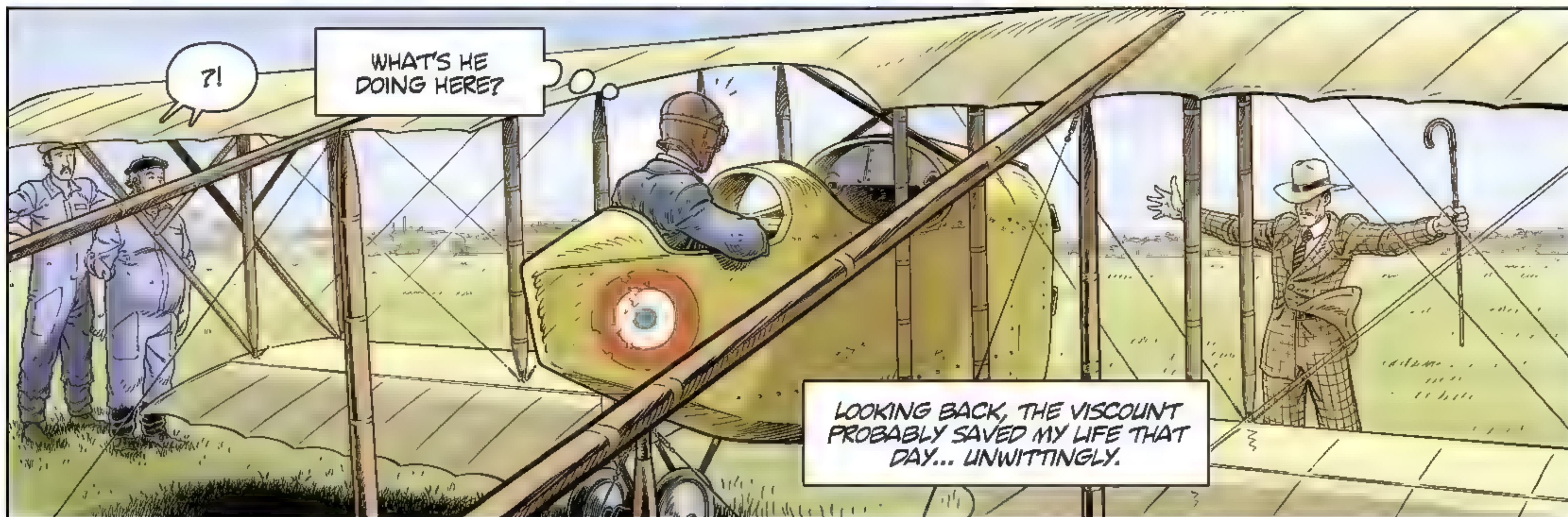
HE WANTS TO BE THE
FIRST TO FLY THIS THING...
WHICH MEANS IT'LL BE ON
THE GROUND FOR QUITE
A WHILE YET!



I KNEW THAT PLANE LIKE THE BACK OF
MY HAND THANKS TO OSCAR, BUT I HADN'T
ACTUALLY EVER FLOWN IT BEFORE.



?! SHIT!!

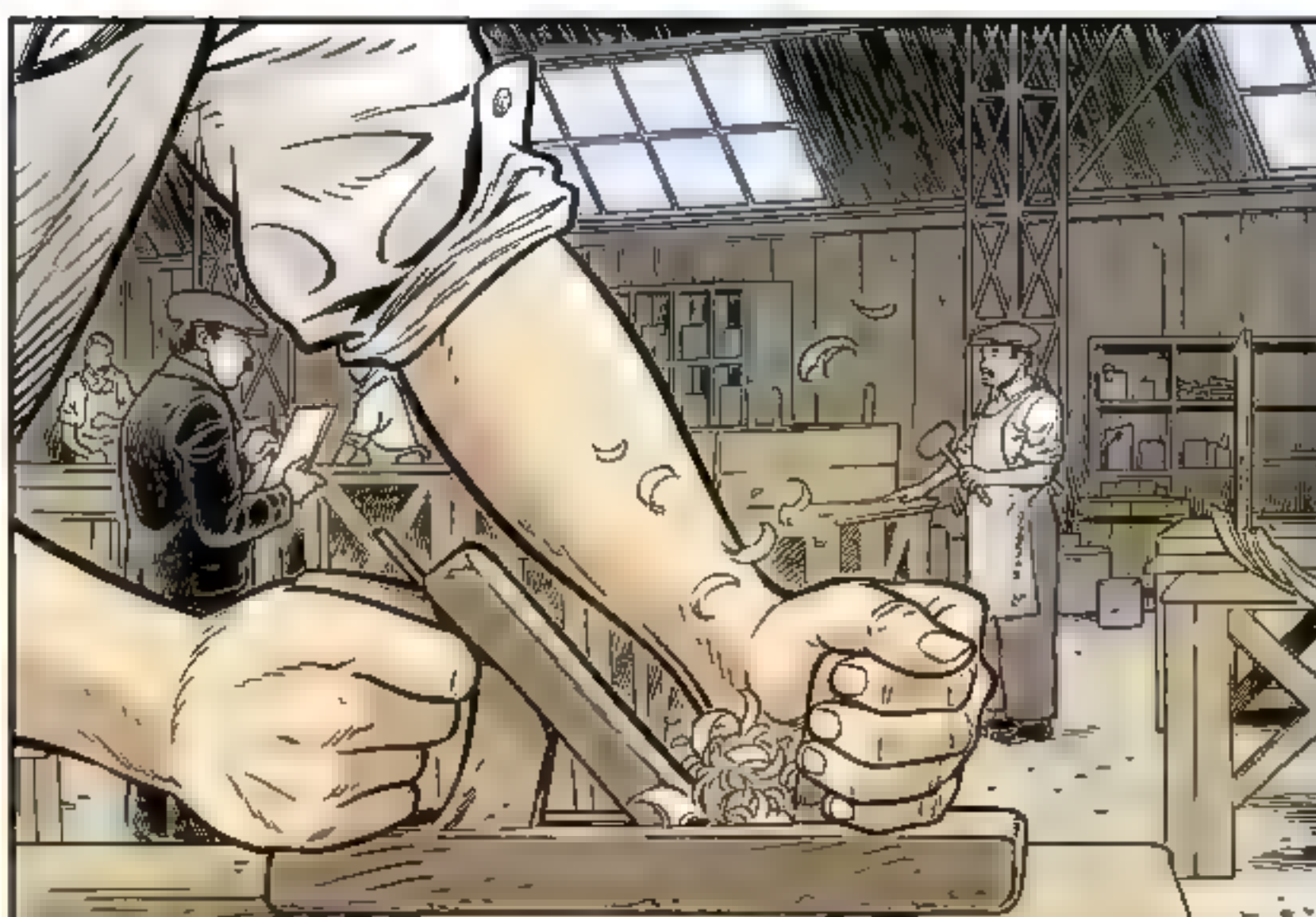


?!

WHAT'S HE
DOING HERE?

LOOKING BACK, THE VISCOUNT
PROBABLY SAVED MY LIFE THAT
DAY... UNWITTINGLY.

IN THE PROCESS, HE BANISHED ME LIKE A TRESPASSER, THREATENING TO REPORT ME TO THE AIRFIELD MANAGERS IF HE EVER SAW ME ANYWHERE NEAR THE HANGARS AGAIN.

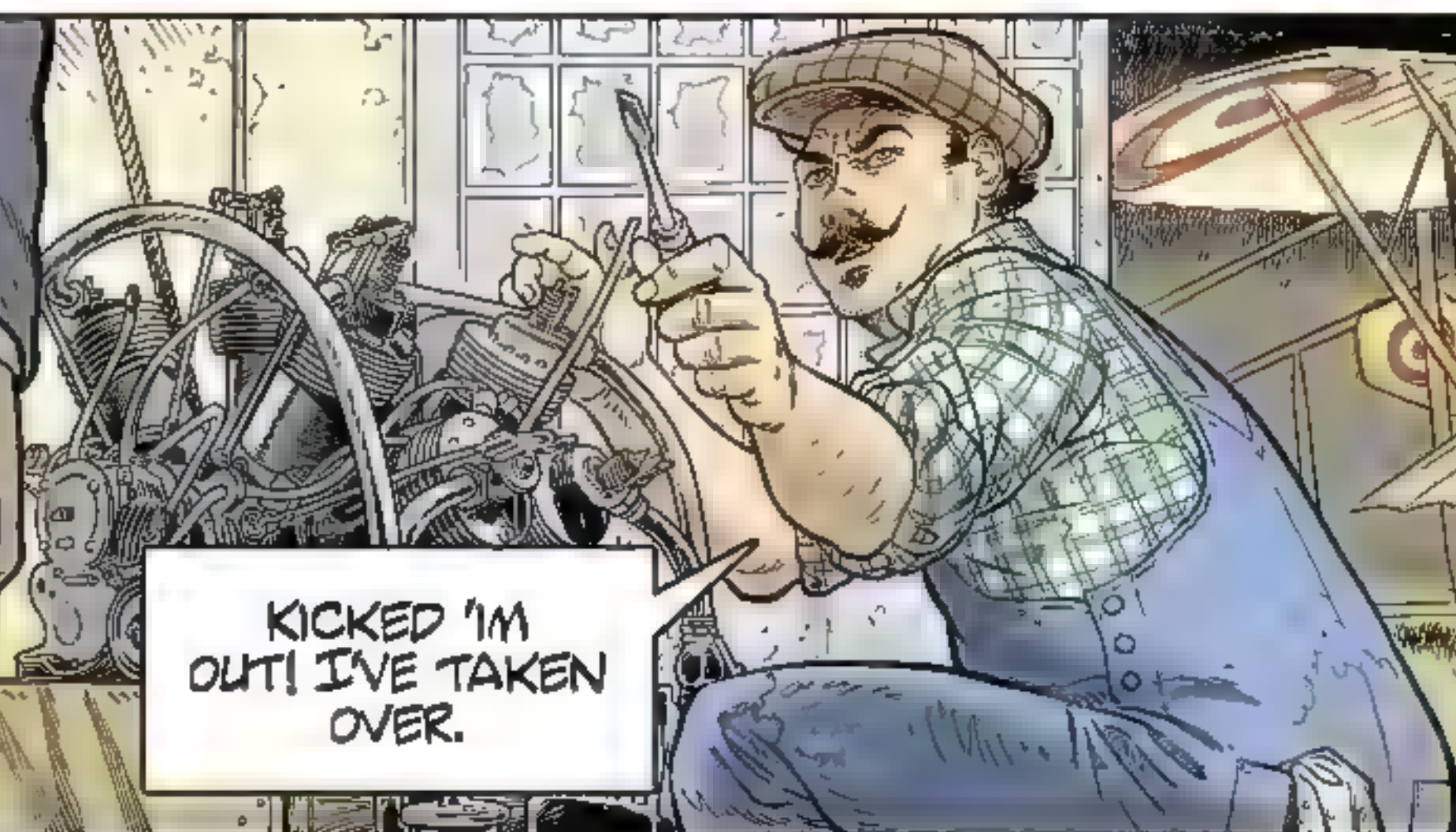
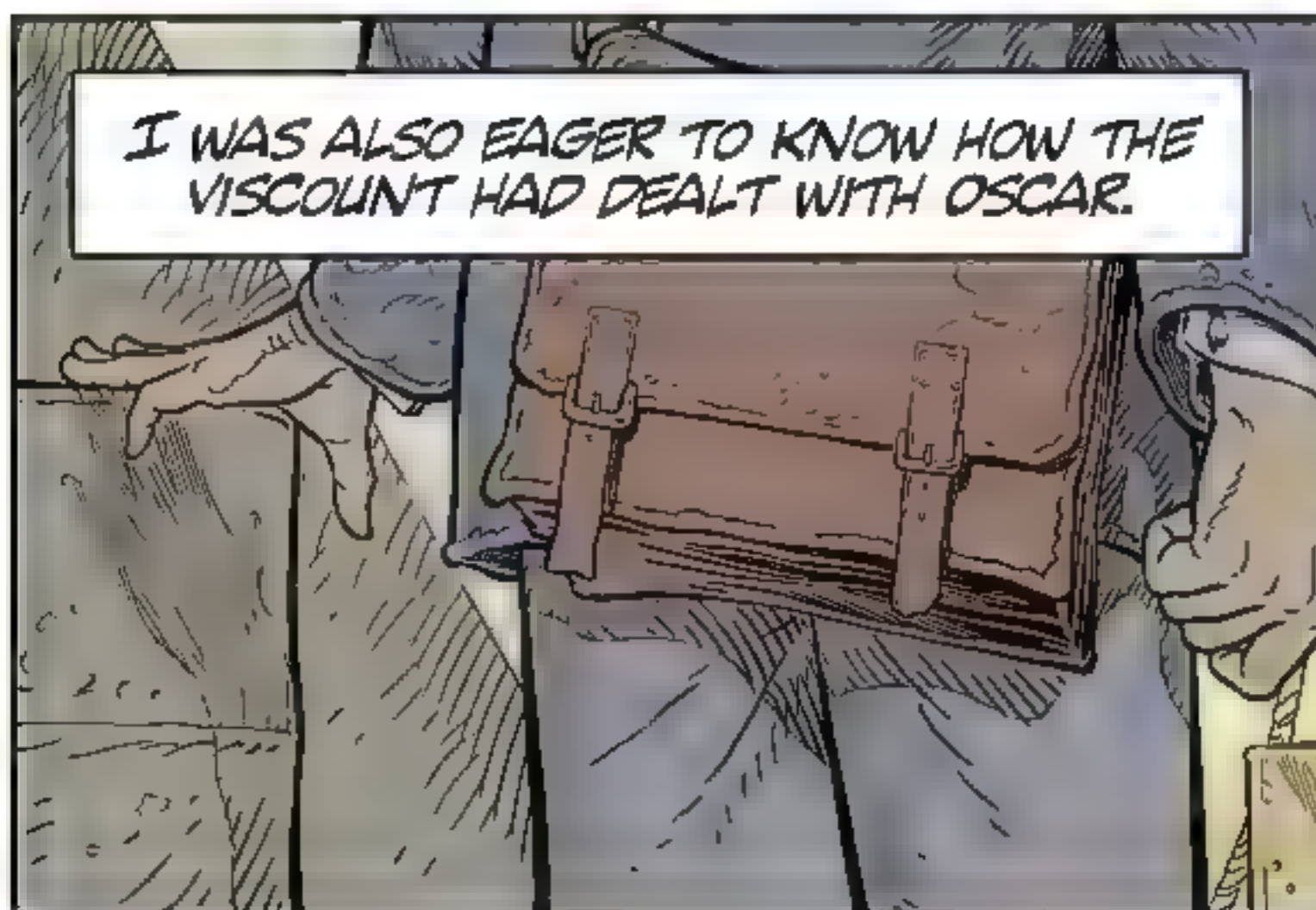


THE NEXT FEW DAYS WERE AWFUL. I REMEMBER THEM AS A KIND OF FEATURELESS GRAY MIST, IN WHICH THE ONLY THING THAT KEPT ME GOING WAS THE MECHANICAL ROUTINE OF MY WORK AT THE FACTORY.

BUT WHEN YOU'RE 19 YEARS OLD, HOPE PRETTY SOON TRIUMPHS OVER DESPAIR, AND WITHIN A WEEK, I WAS BACK AT THE AIRFIELD!

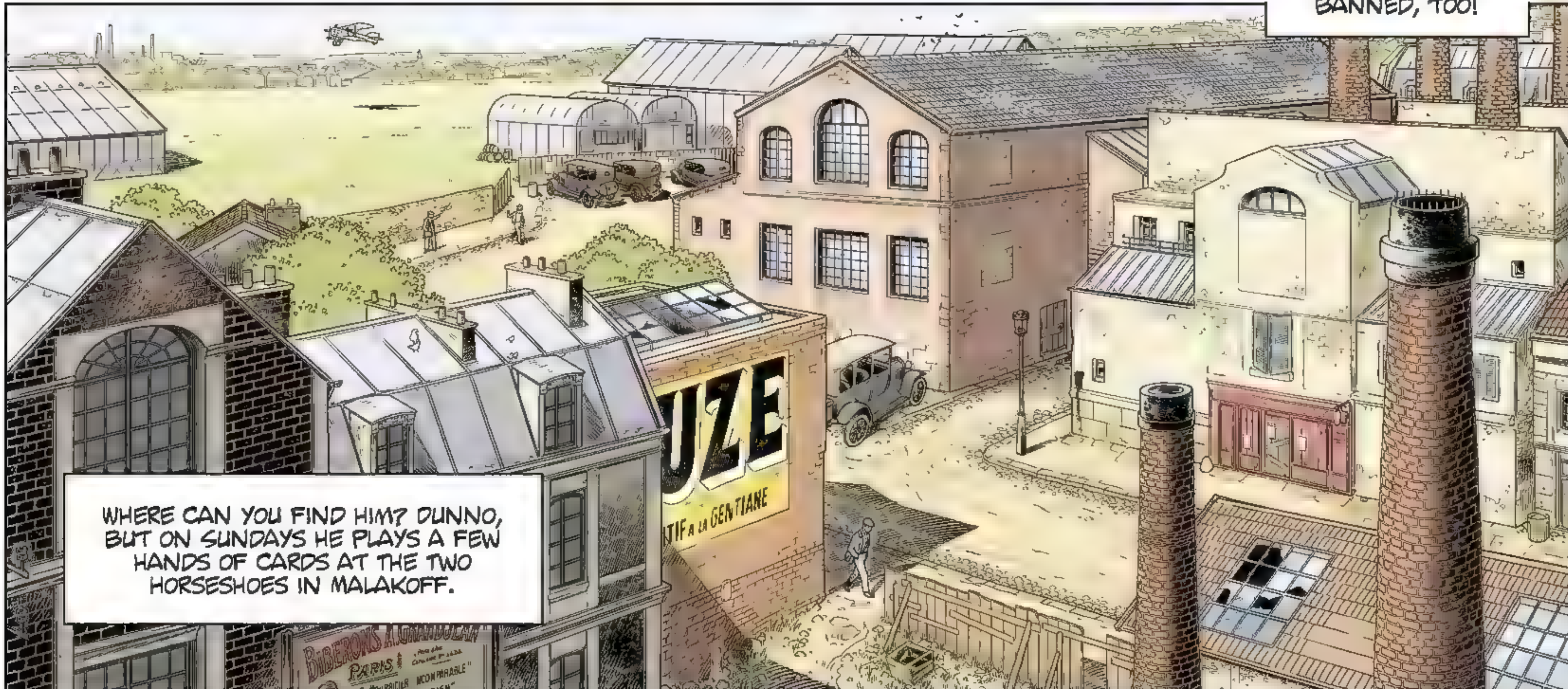


I WAS ALSO EAGER TO KNOW HOW THE VISCOUNT HAD DEALT WITH OSCAR.

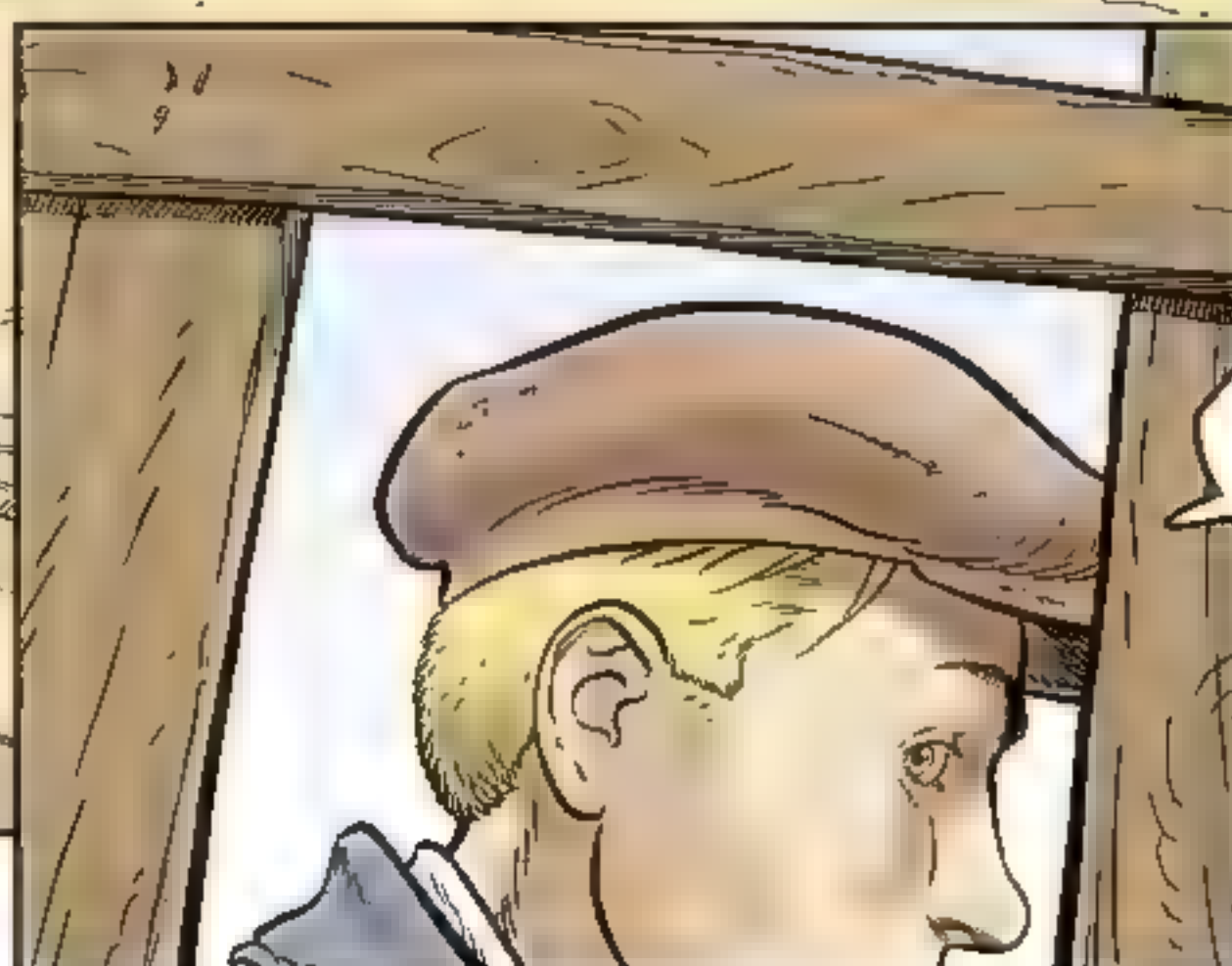
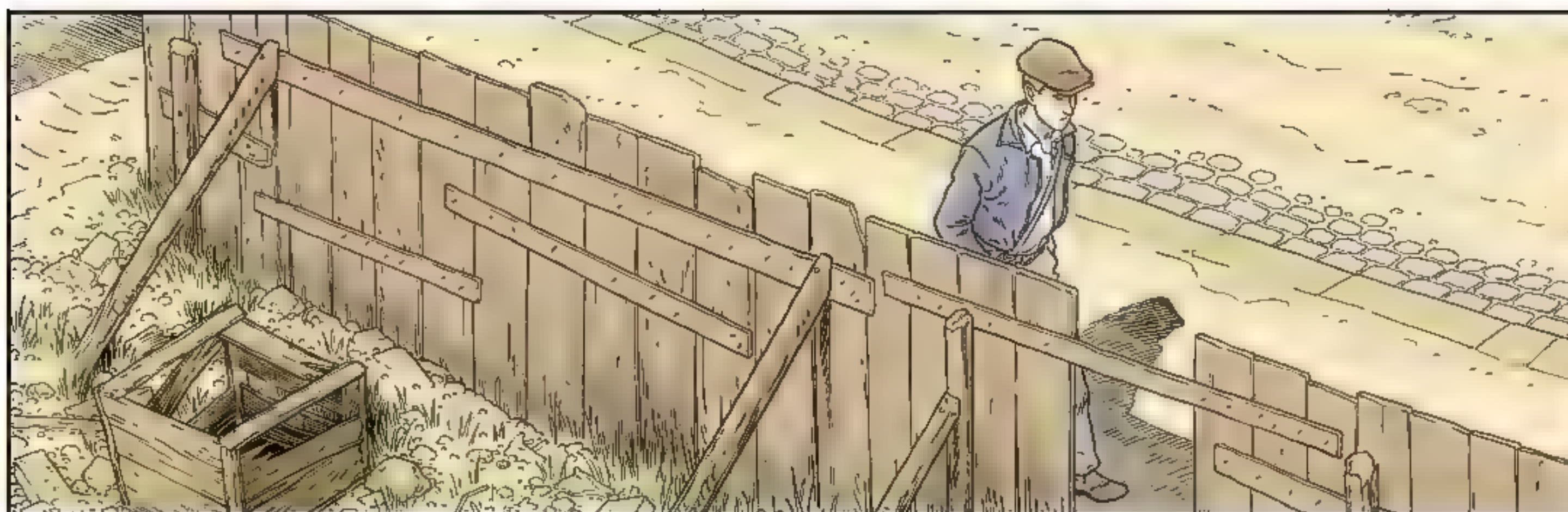


KICKED 'IM OUT! I'VE TAKEN OVER.

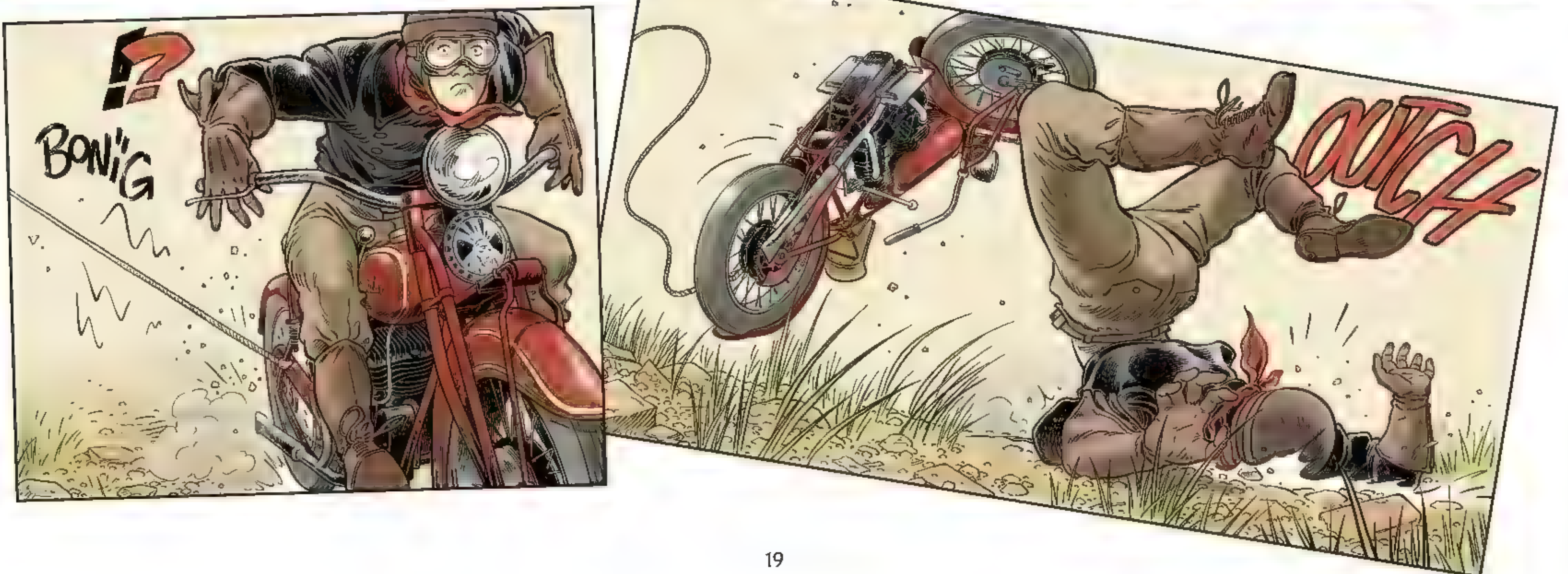
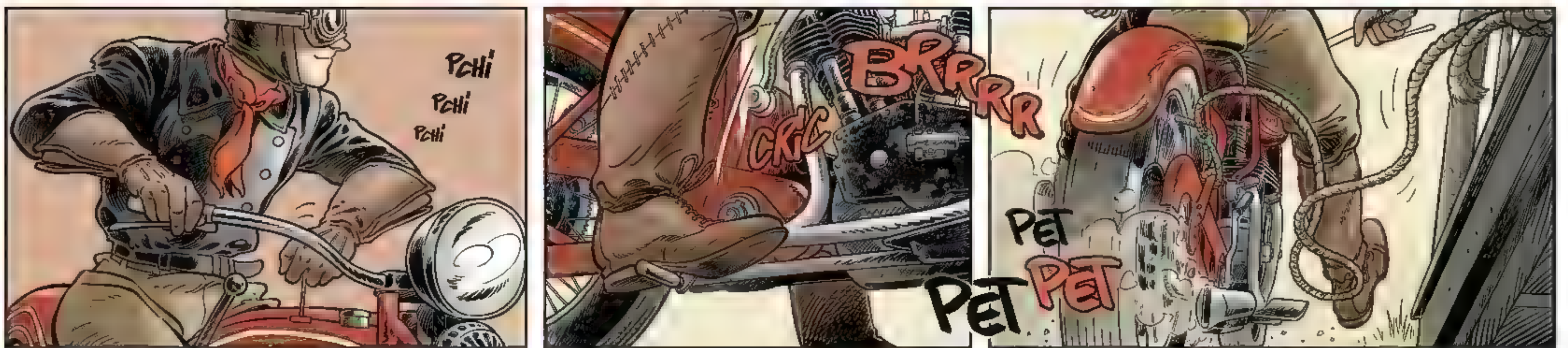
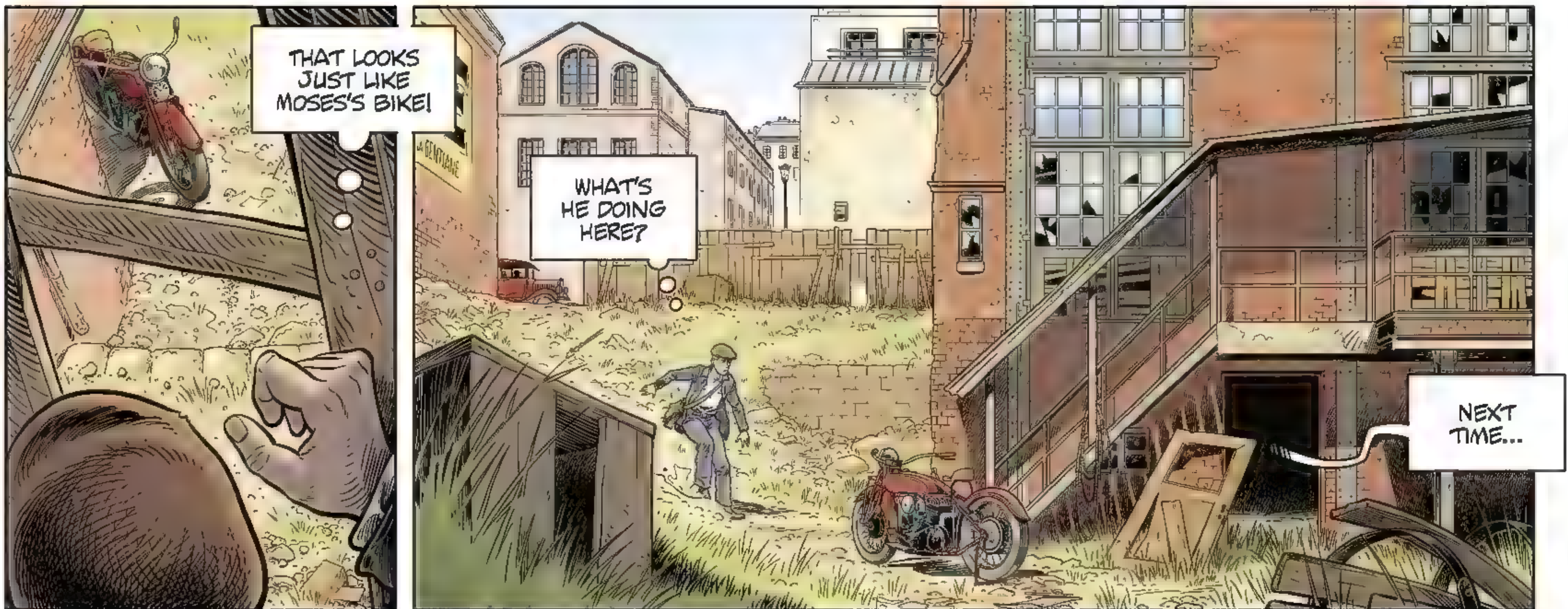
AND YOU CAN GET LOST! YOU'RE BANNED, TOO!



WHERE CAN YOU FIND HIM? DUNNO, BUT ON SUNDAYS HE PLAYS A FEW HANDS OF CARDS AT THE TWO HORSESHOES IN MALAKOFF.



??





WHAT ARE YOU UP TO, MOSES?

JOSEF?!



CHRIST, LET GO!!

NOT TILL YOU ANSWER!

GO TO HELL! IF YOU DON'T LET GO OF ME, MY FRIENDS'LL DEAL WITH YOU!



SO THAT'S IT! YOU'RE WORKING FOR THOSE GUYS, THE APACHES! (1) I SHOULD'VE GUESSED!

OW! YOU'RE HURTING ME!



WHAT'RE YOU SELLING?

ENGLISH CIGARETTES?

DIRTY PICTURES?



WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?

HEROIN!

IS IT MEDICINE?

IT'S A DRUG, YOU IDIOT, LIKE OPIUM!!



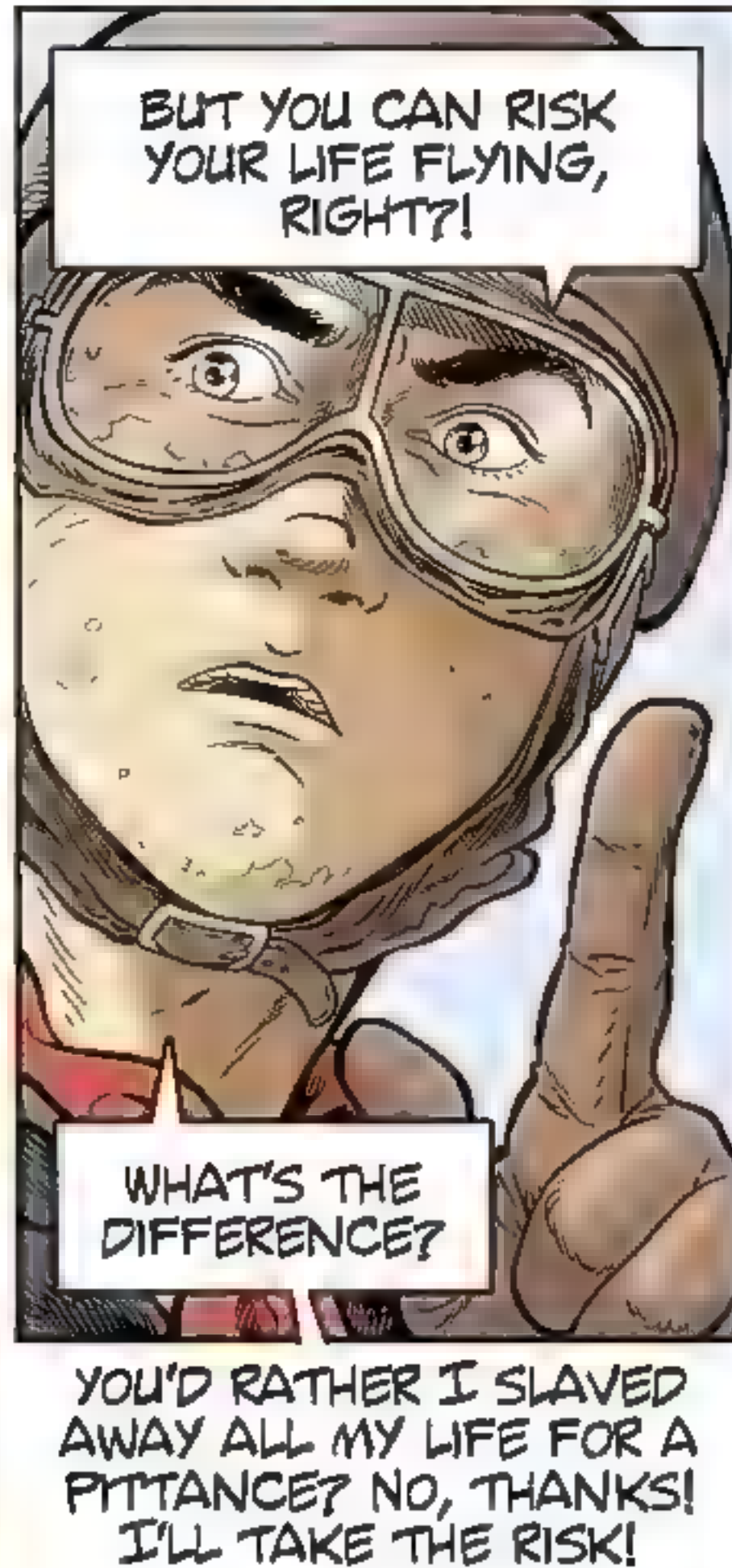
IS IT ILLEGAL?

ARE YOU REALLY THAT NAIVE, JOSEF? OF COURSE IT'S ILLEGAL!

BUT ARTISTS AND THE IDLE RICH--LIKE THAT VISCOUNT OF YOURS--CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF IT. THAT AND COCAINE. SUPPLYING IT'S EASY MONEY!



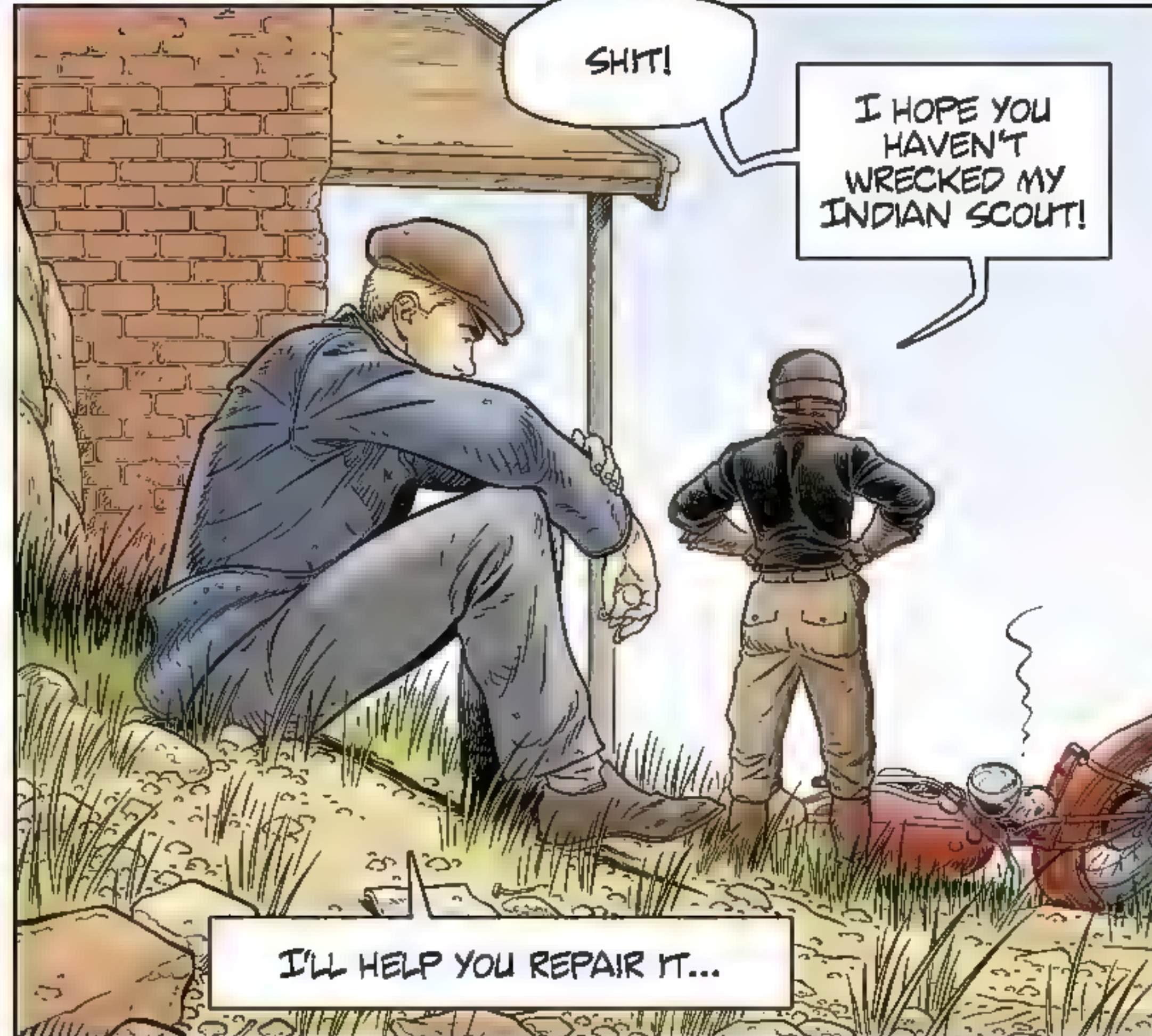
EASY?! YOU COULD GO TO PRISON, OR EVEN A LABOR CAMP!



BUT YOU CAN RISK YOUR LIFE FLYING, RIGHT?!

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

YOU'D RATHER I SLAVED AWAY ALL MY LIFE FOR A PITTANCE? NO, THANKS! I'LL TAKE THE RISK!

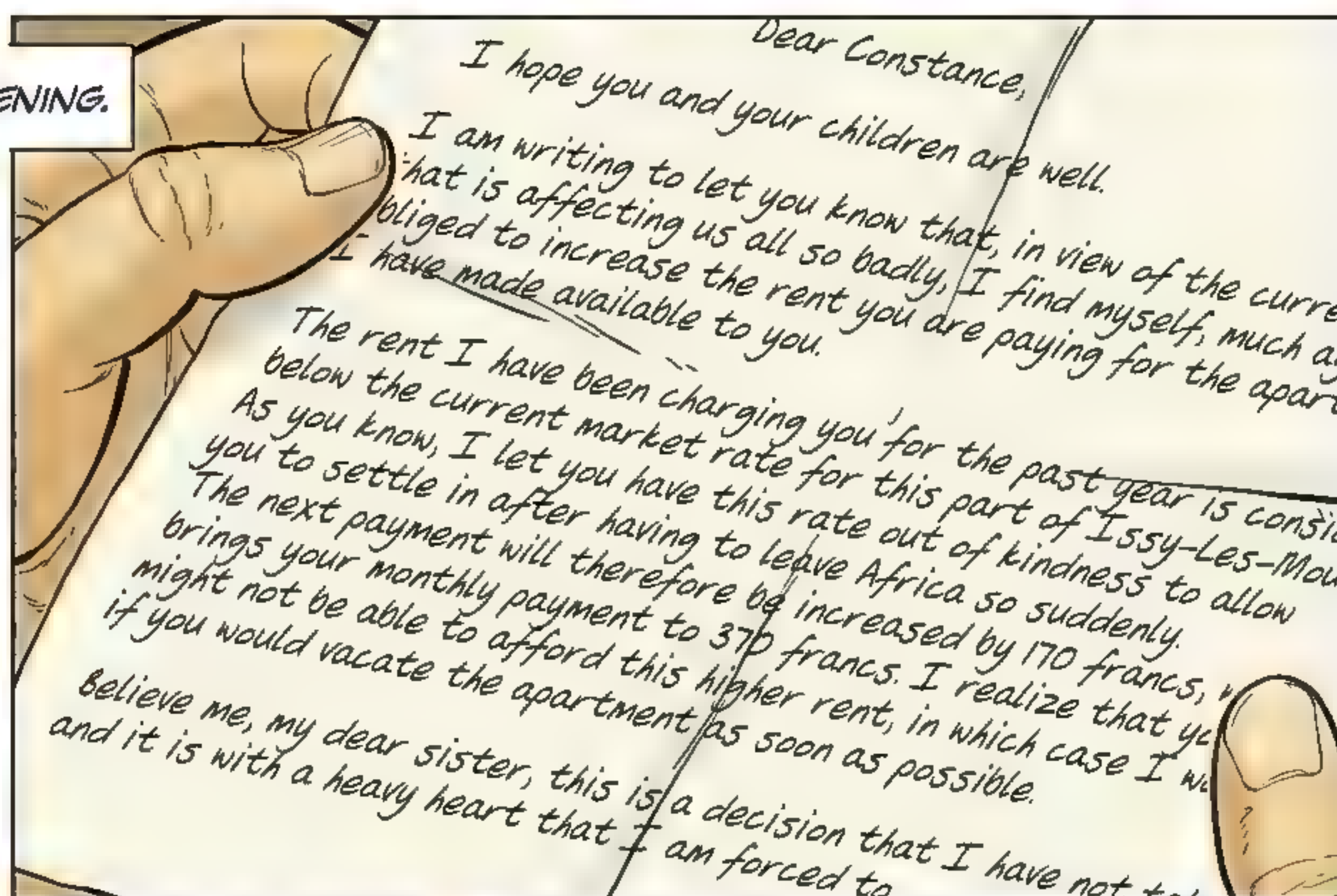
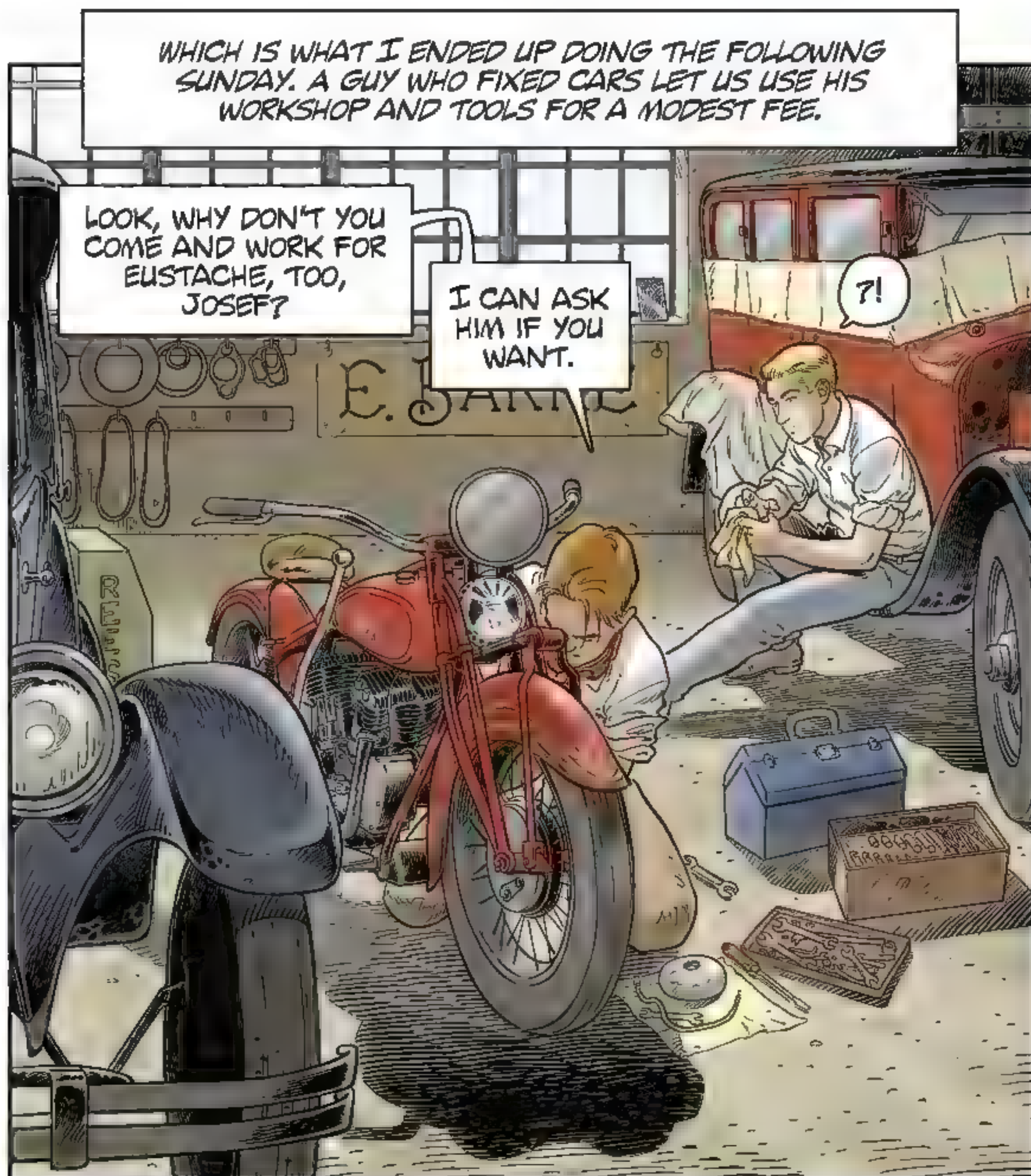


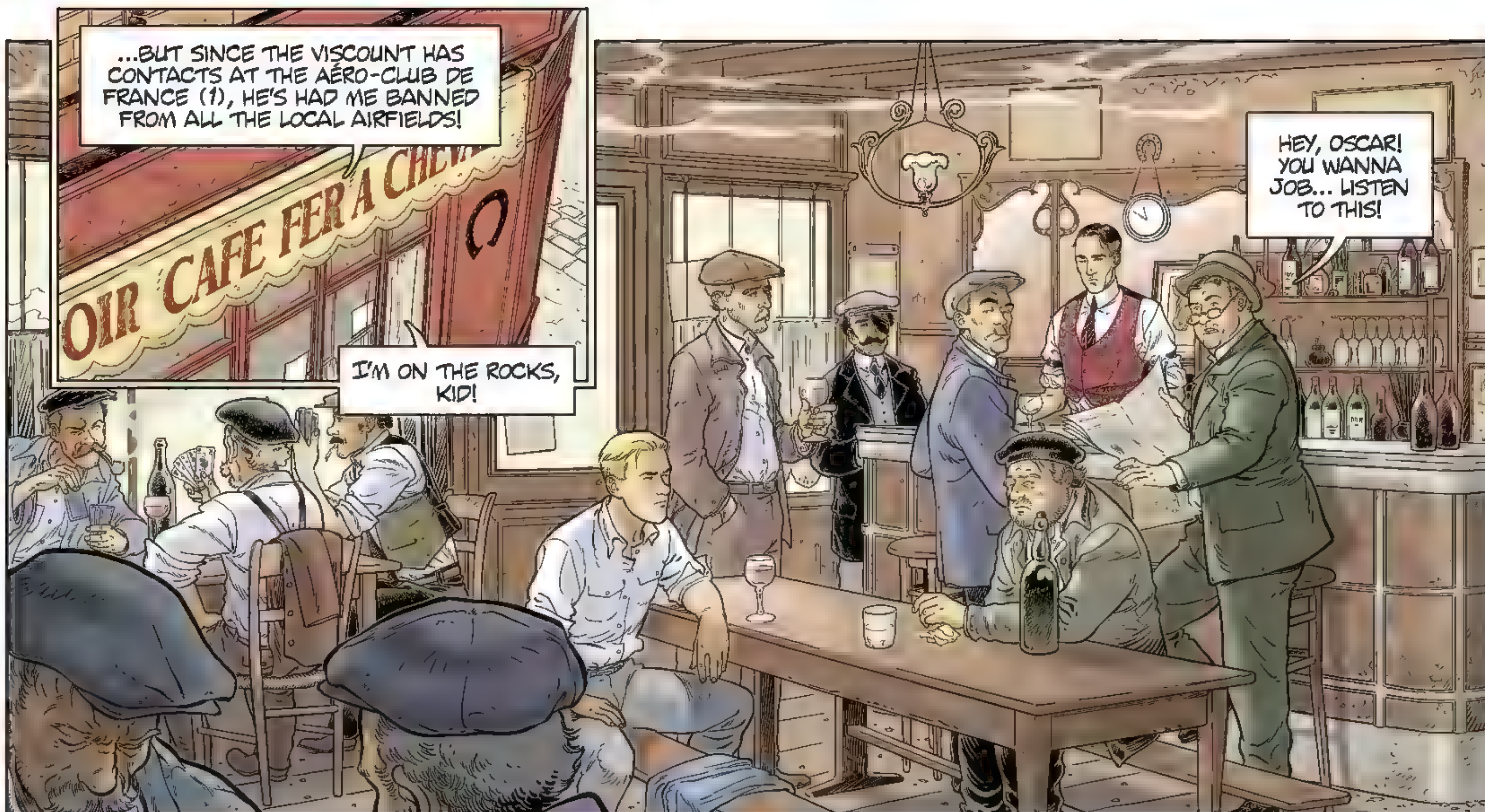
SHIT!

I HOPE YOU HAVEN'T WRECKED MY INDIAN SCOUT!

I'LL HELP YOU REPAIR IT...

(1) SO-CALLED ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR RED NECKERCHIEFS AND "SAVAGE" BEHAVIOR.





...BUT SINCE THE VISCOUNT HAS CONTACTS AT THE AÉRO-CLUB DE FRANCE (1), HE'S HAD ME BANNED FROM ALL THE LOCAL AIRFIELDS!

I'M ON THE ROCKS, KID!

HEY, OSCAR! YOU WANNA JOB... LISTEN TO THIS!



"COUPLE ARRESTED ON TRAIN FROM MARSEILLE. PUZZLED BY THE WEIGHT OF THEIR CASES WHEN HE LOADED THEM AT MARSEILLE, A RAILWAY PORTER ALERTED THE POLICE WHILE THE TRAIN PROCEEDED TO PARIS. THANKS TO HIS QUICK THINKING..."



"...POLICE OFFICERS WERE WAITING FOR THE COUPLE AT THE GARE DE LYON, AND QUESTIONED THEM AS THEY ALIGHTED FROM THEIR CARRIAGE. IT WAS THEN DISCOVERED THAT THE COUPLE WERE CARRYING A TOTAL OF 150 POUNDS OF COCAINE, VALUED AT..."



WAIT FOR IT...



"...AROUND 350,000 FRANCS!" (2)

HOLY COW!

YOU COULD BUY UP THE WHOLE TOWN!



IT'S THE PERFECT JOB FOR YOU, OSCAR!

CARRYING BAGS FULL OF ILLEGAL DRUGS!

A POSITION HAS OPENED UP!

GOOD GOD! AND WE'RE ONLY LEFT WITH SCRAPS!

(1) FOUNDED IN 1898.
(2) AT THE TIME, A MANUAL WORKER EARNED AROUND 350 FRANCS PER MONTH.



COULD I BORROW YOUR PAPER A MINUTE, SIR?

?!



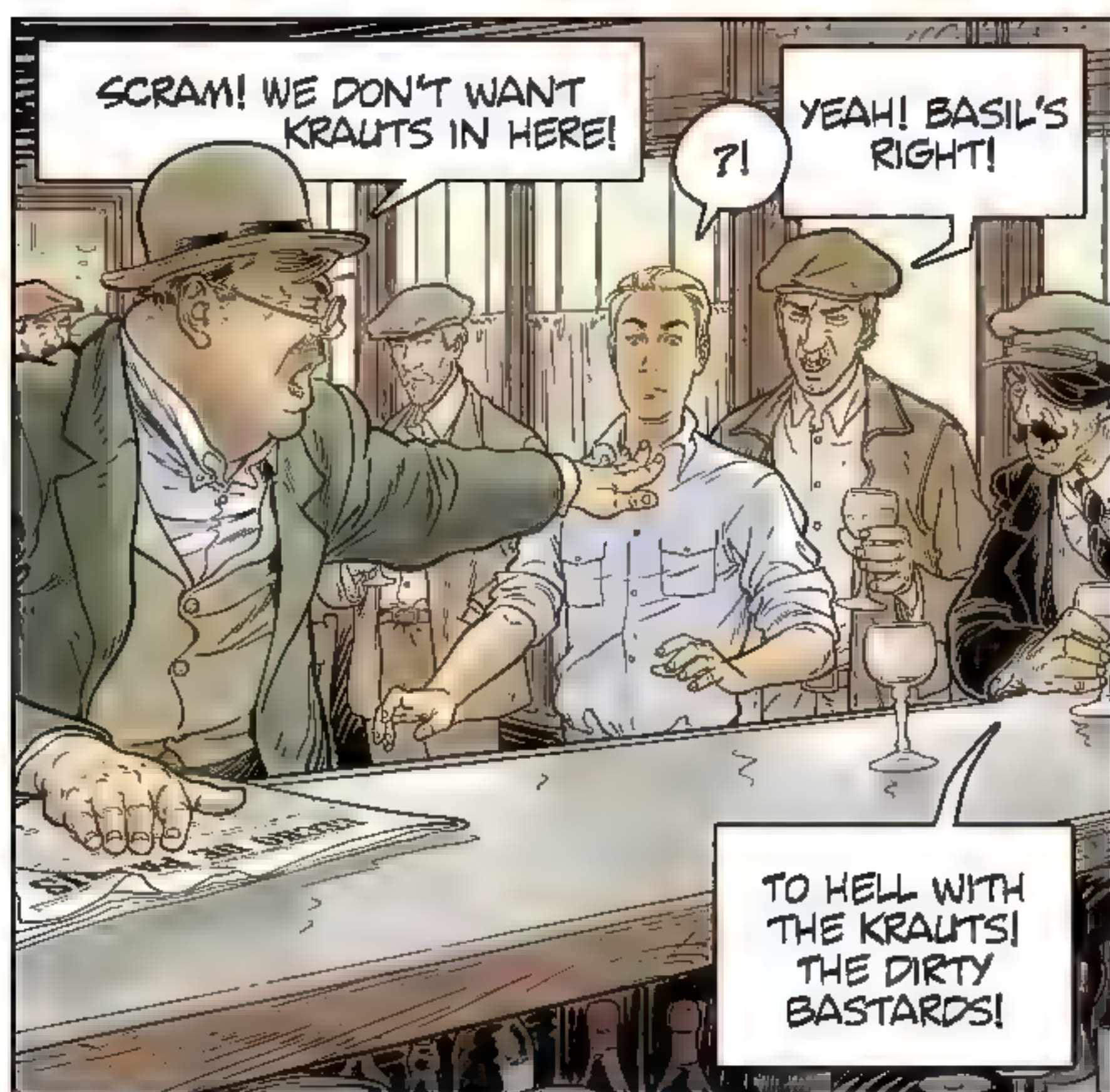
HEY, KID, WHAT'S WITH THE WEIRD ACCENT? YOU GOT A LITTLE OF THE FRITZ IN YOU?

I'M FROM ALSACE, SIR!



HA!
HA!
HA!

HAHA! HE WANTS TO READ MY PAPER, BUT THE LITTLE RAT CAN'T EVEN SPEAK PROPER FRENCH!



SCRAM! WE DON'T WANT KRAUTS IN HERE!

?!

YEAH! BASIL'S RIGHT!

TO HELL WITH THE KRAUTS! THE DIRTY BASTARDS!



LEAVE HIM ALONE, BASIL!

HE'S WITH ME!

OH YEAH? THEN YOU CAN SCRAM, TOO!



IGNORE HIM, JOSEF. COME SIT DOWN!

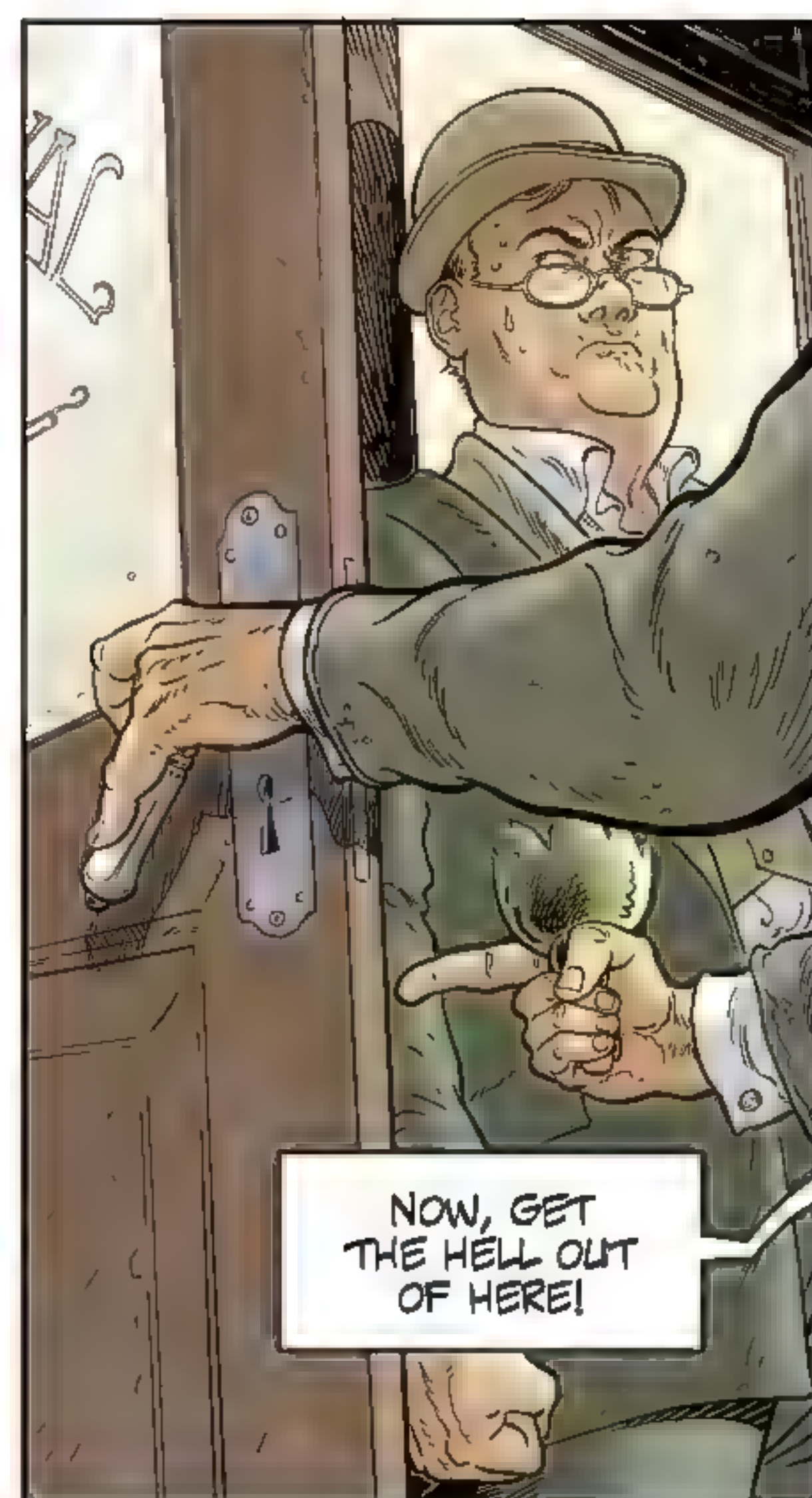


DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME, OSCAR? YOU AND THE FRITZ, OUT! NOW!

AND DON'T TRY TO BE A SMARTASS WITH ME. YOU DON'T CUT IT!

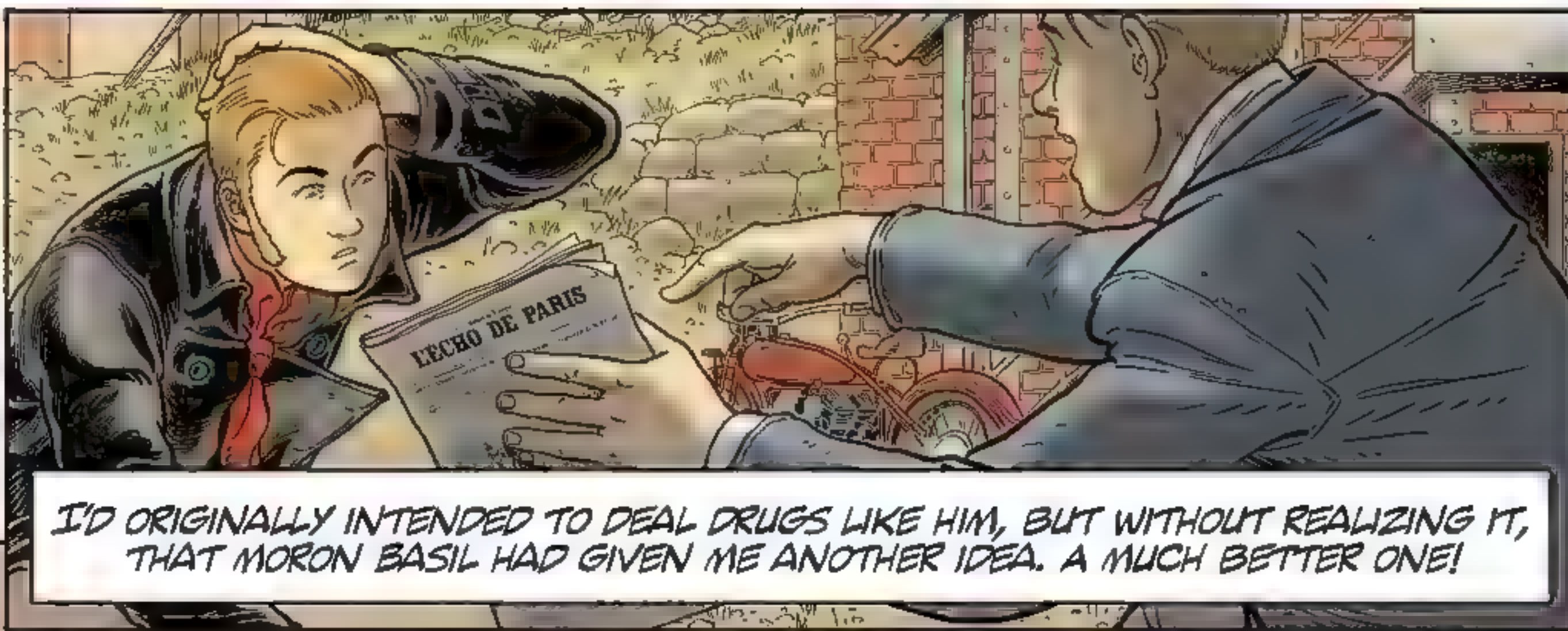
I CAN CUT IT WITH THIS, YOU PIECE OF SHIT!







AT FIRST, MY BROTHER WAS DELIGHTED THAT I'D AGREED TO WORK FOR EUSTACHE.

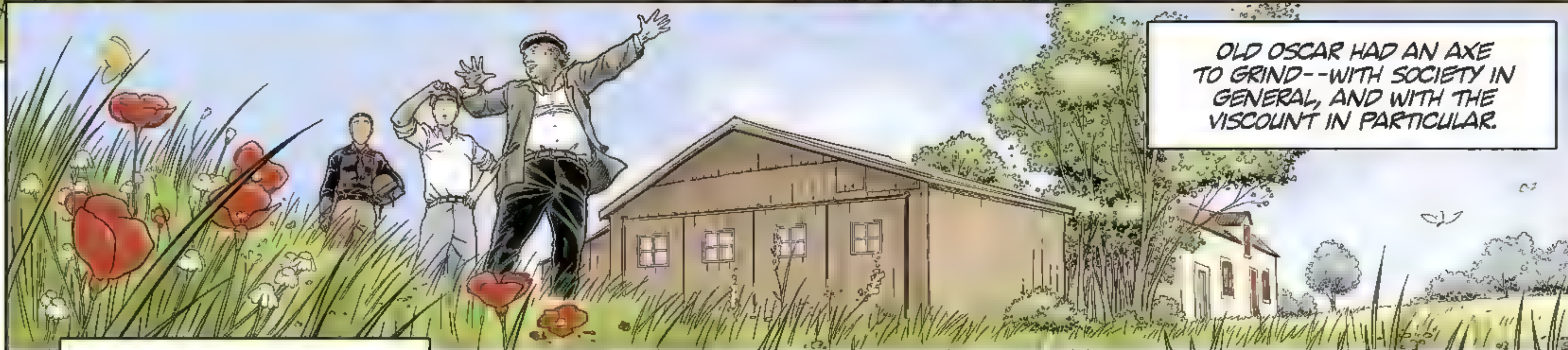
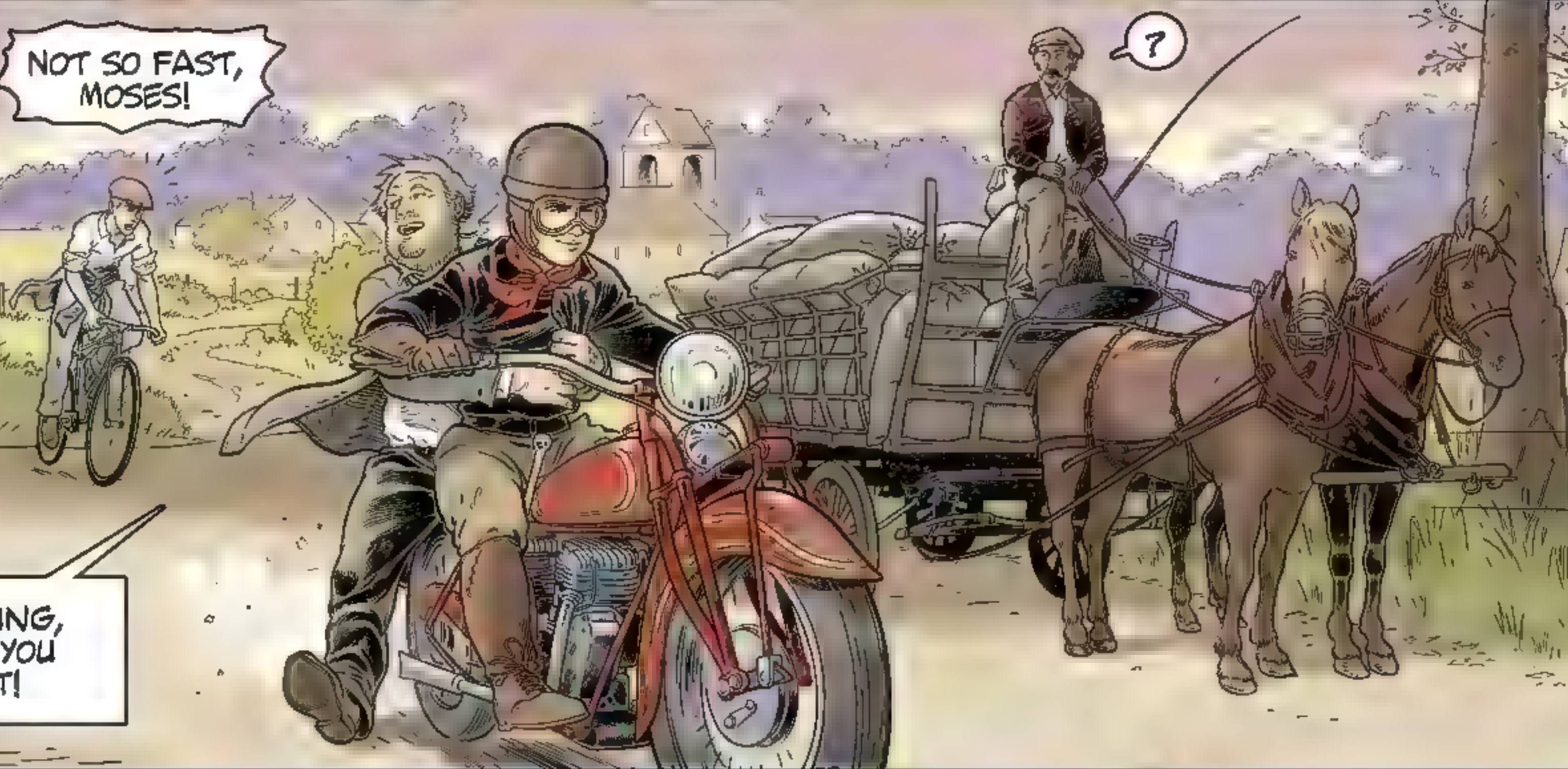


I'D ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO DEAL DRUGS LIKE HIM, BUT WITHOUT REALIZING IT, THAT MORON BASIL HAD GIVEN ME ANOTHER IDEA. A MUCH BETTER ONE!

IT MEANT THAT I NEEDED OSCAR'S COMPLICITY, BUT HE WAS QUITE HAPPY TO GO ALONG WITH IT.

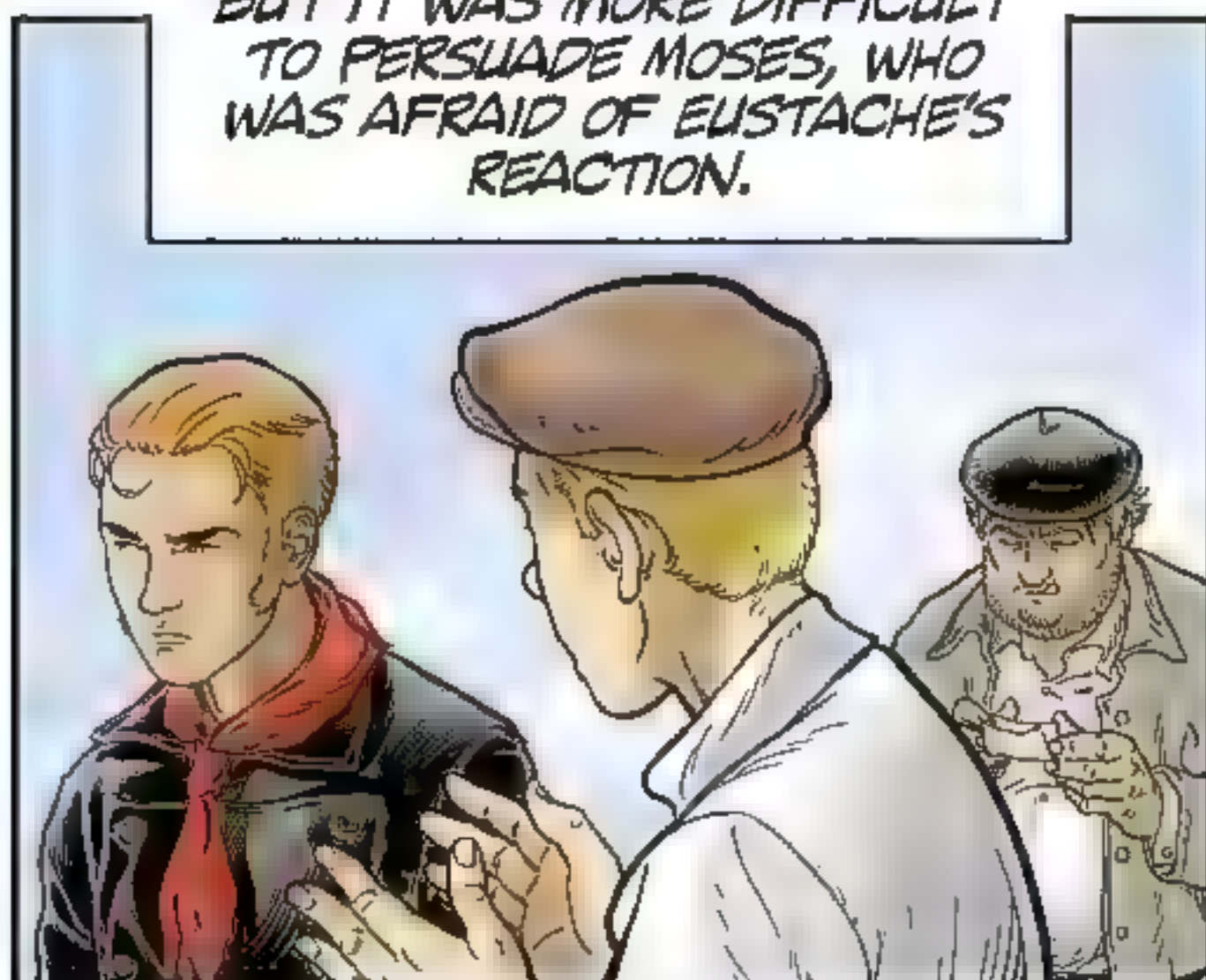
NOT SO FAST, MOSES!

KEEP PEDALING, LAPIZE! (1) YOU CAN DO IT!

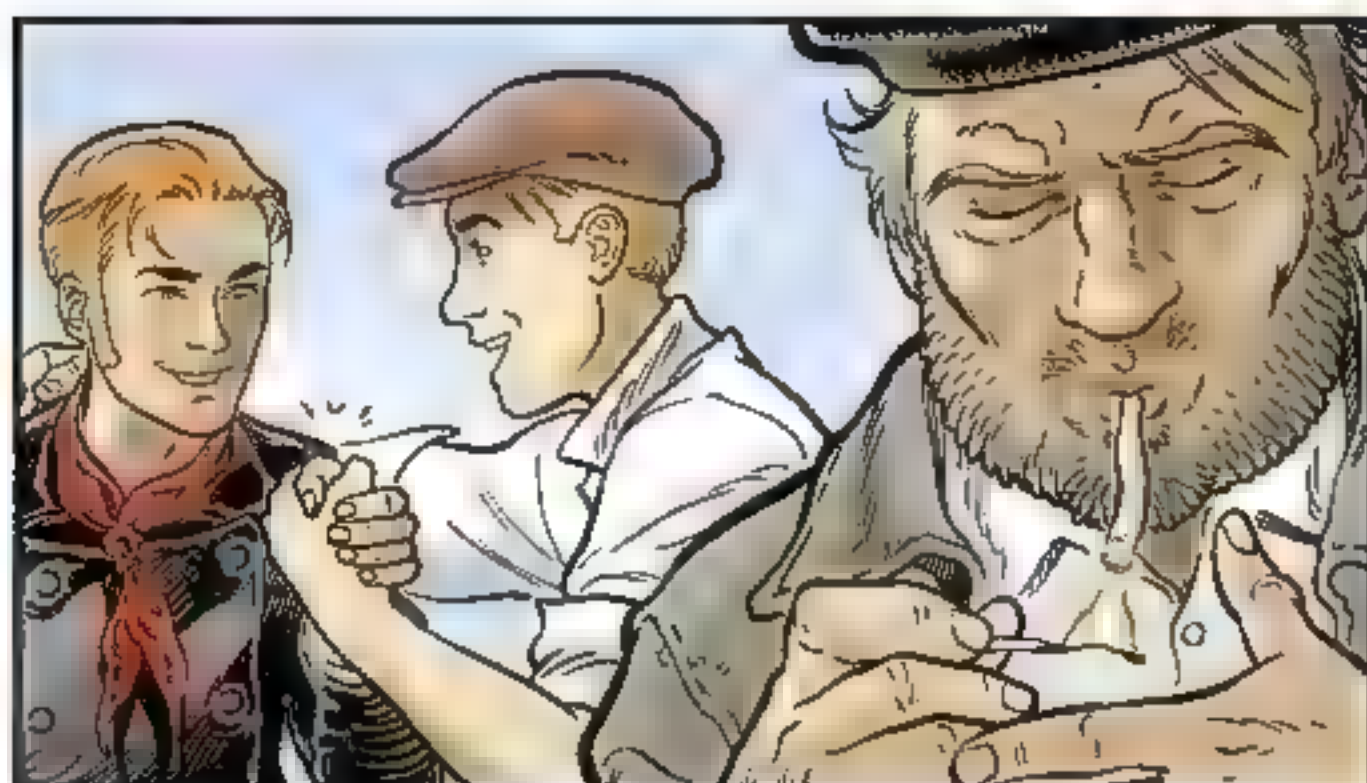


OLD OSCAR HAD AN AXE TO GRIND--WITH SOCIETY IN GENERAL, AND WITH THE VISCOUNT IN PARTICULAR.

BUT IT WAS MORE DIFFICULT TO PERSUADE MOSES, WHO WAS AFRAID OF EUSTACHE'S REACTION.



BUT AFTER OSCAR'S PERFORMANCE AT THE TWO HORSESHOES, I WAS NO LONGER AFRAID OF THE APACHES.

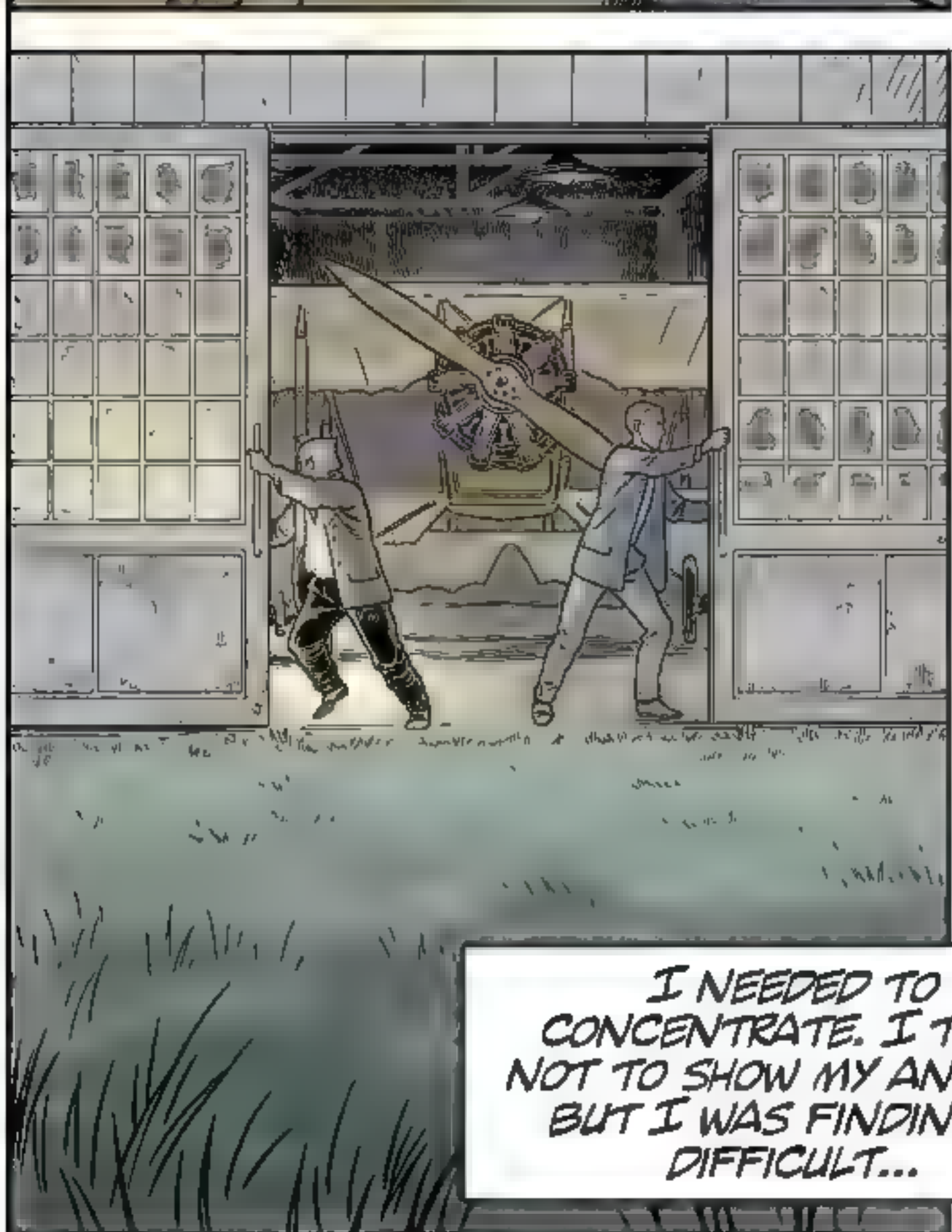
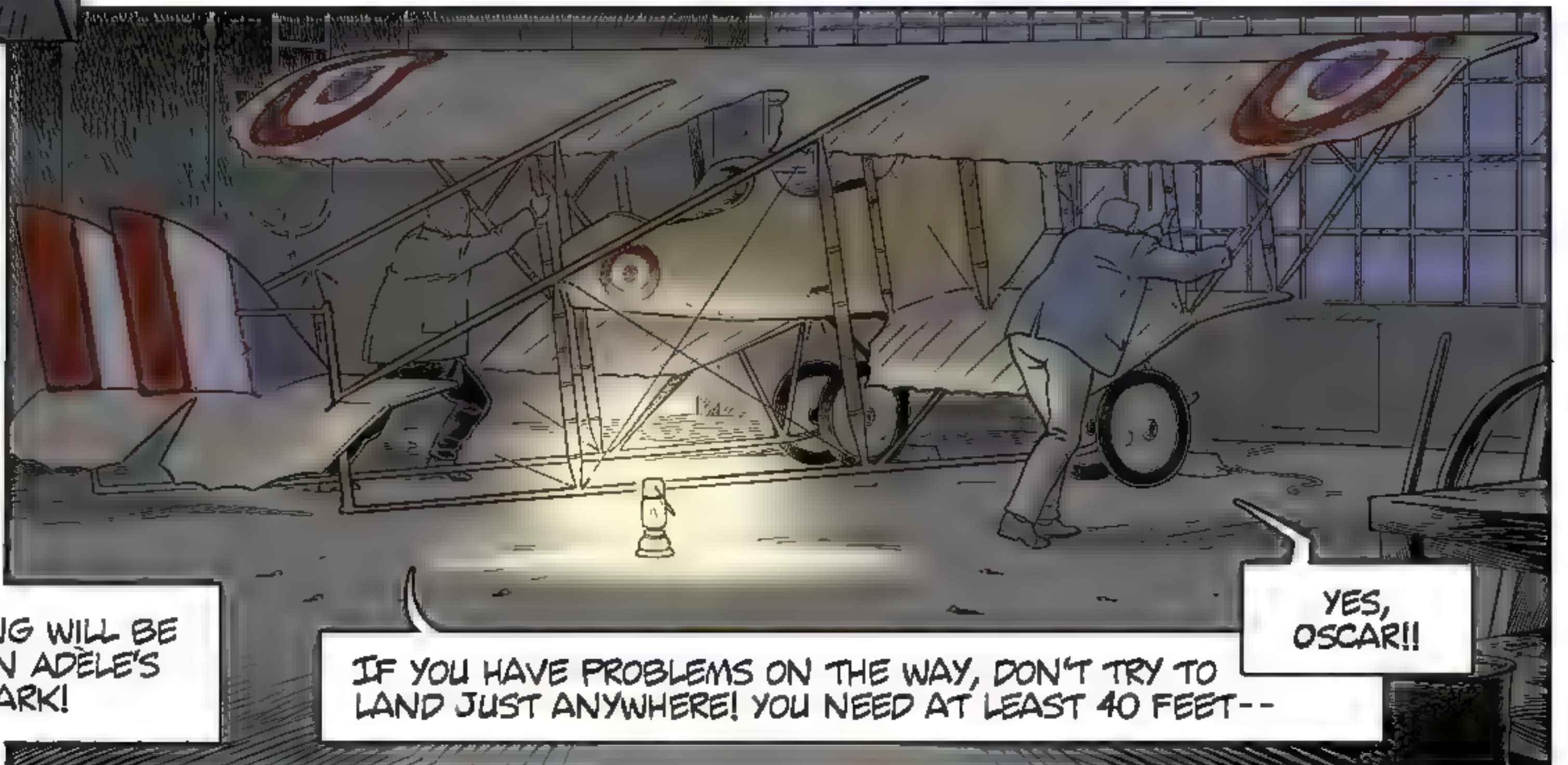
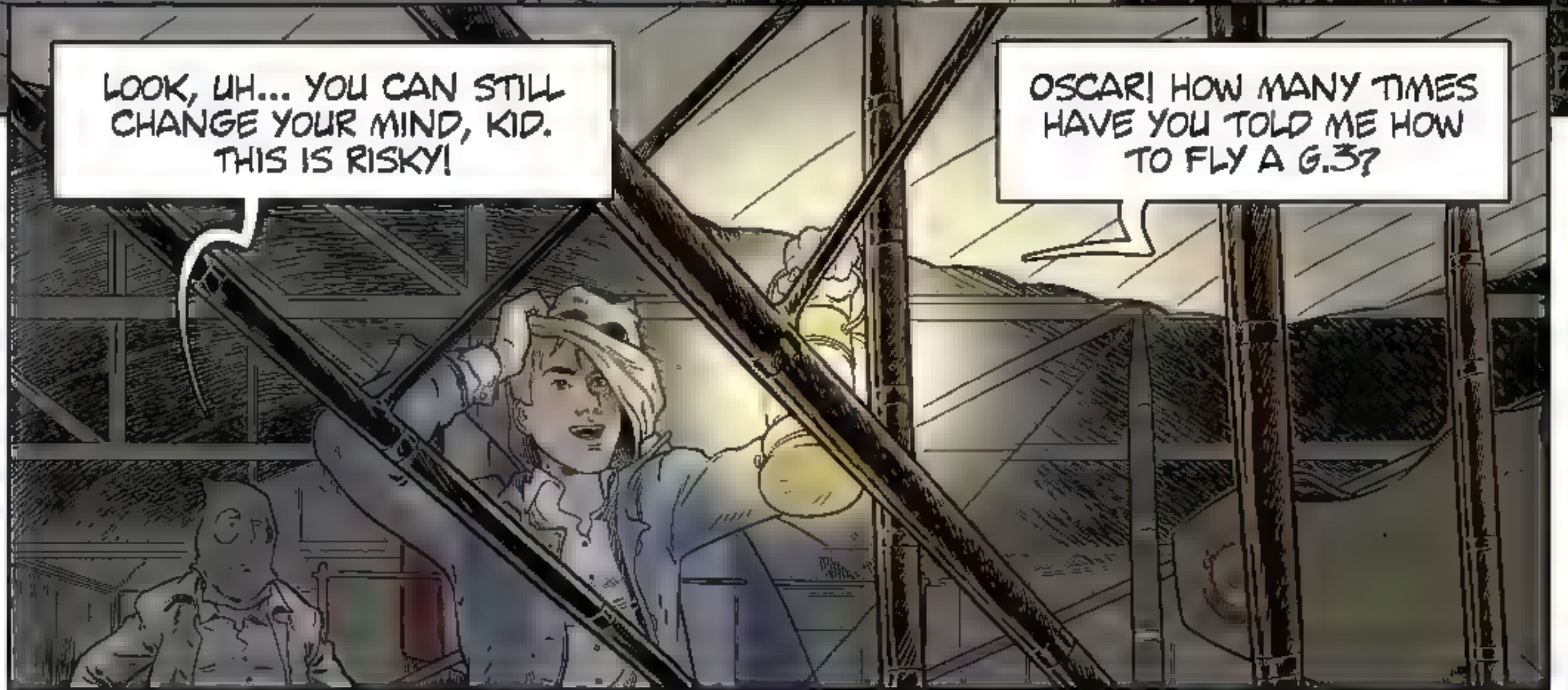


AND IT WAS OSCAR WHO FOUND US AN AIRFIELD--AN ORDINARY FIELD, IN FACT, NEAR BRÉTIGNY THAT BELONGED TO ONE OF HIS COUSINS, WHO HAD LOST HER HUSBAND IN THE WAR.

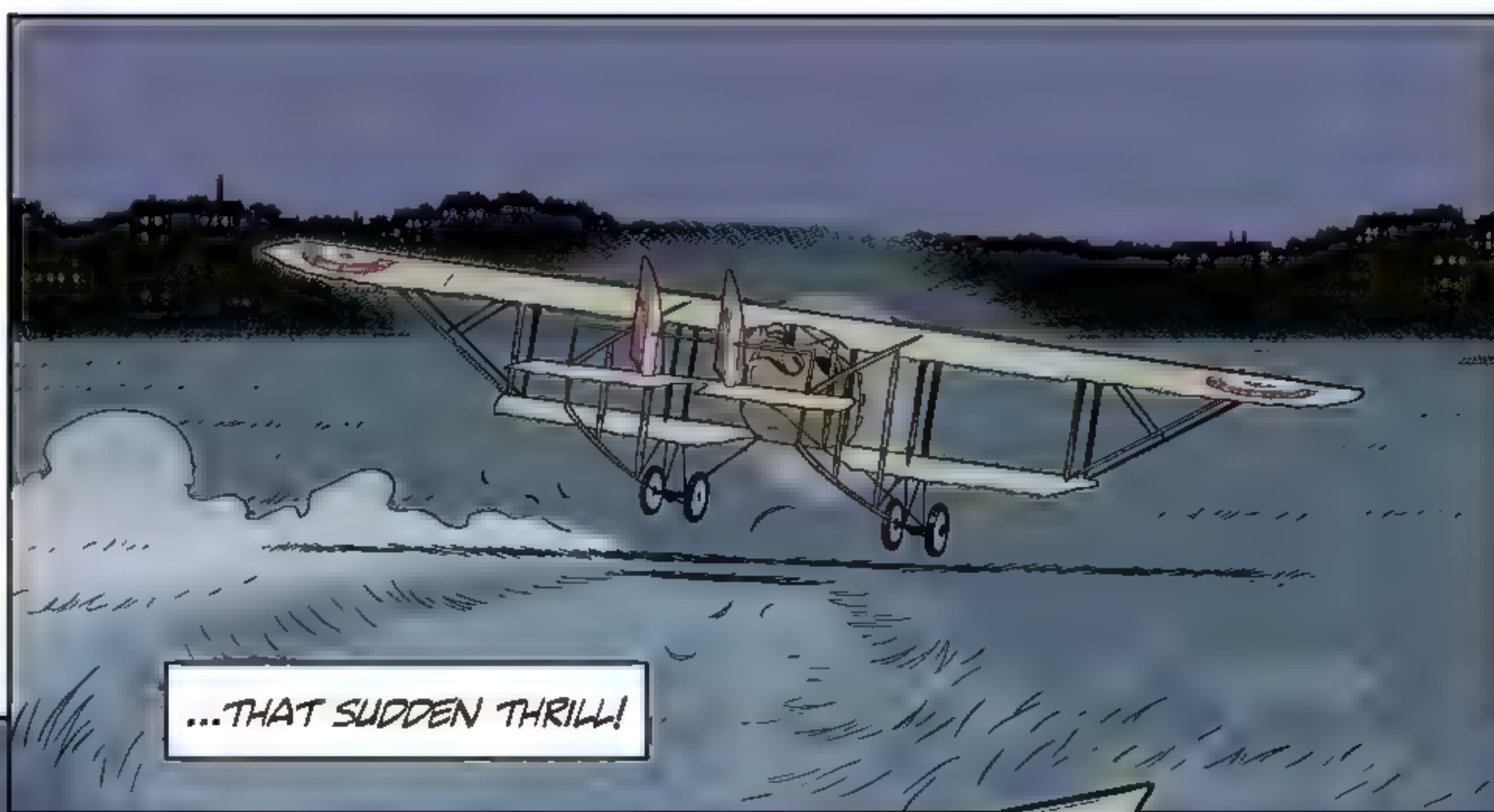
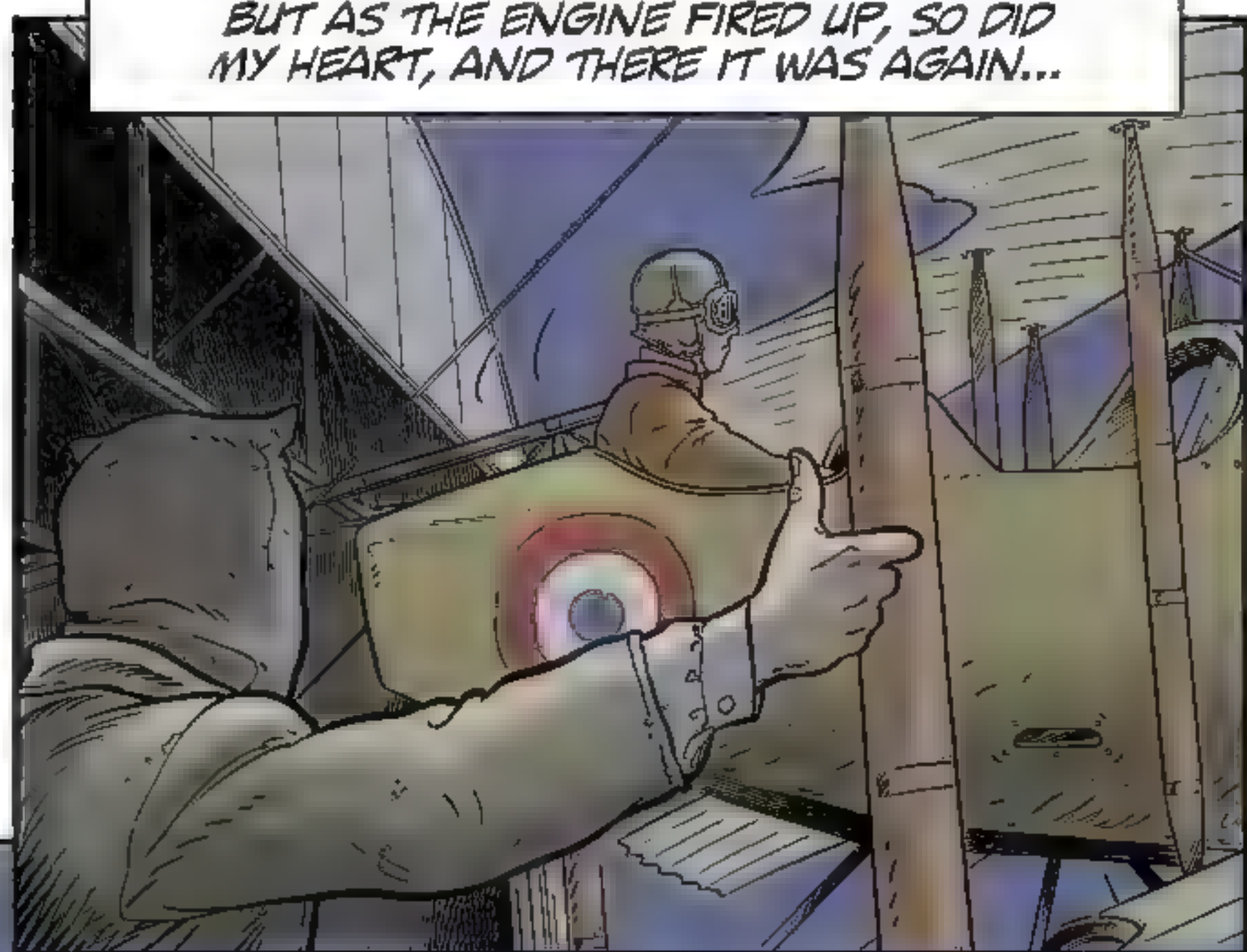


SHE WAS OUT OF WORK AND RENTED IT TO US, ALONG WITH A BARN, FOR NEXT TO NOTHING.

(1) OCTAVE LAPIZE WAS A FRENCH CYCLIST WHO WON THE TOUR DE FRANCE IN 1910.

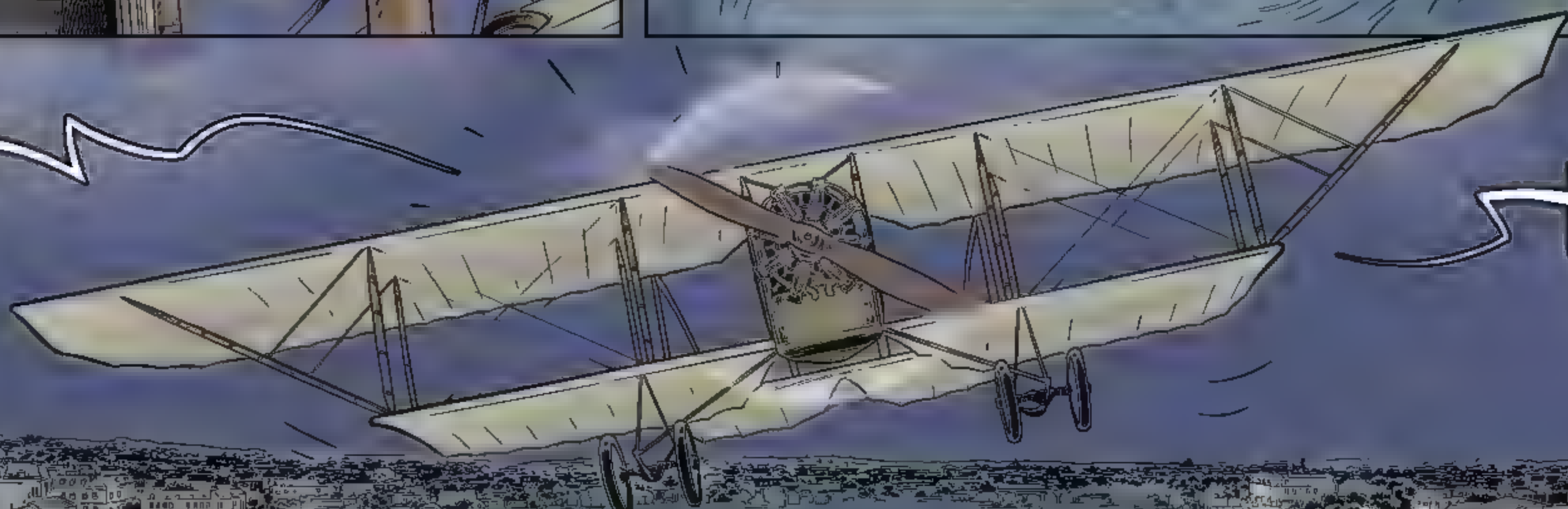


BUT AS THE ENGINE FIRED UP, SO DID MY HEART, AND THERE IT WAS AGAIN...



...THAT SUDDEN THRILL!

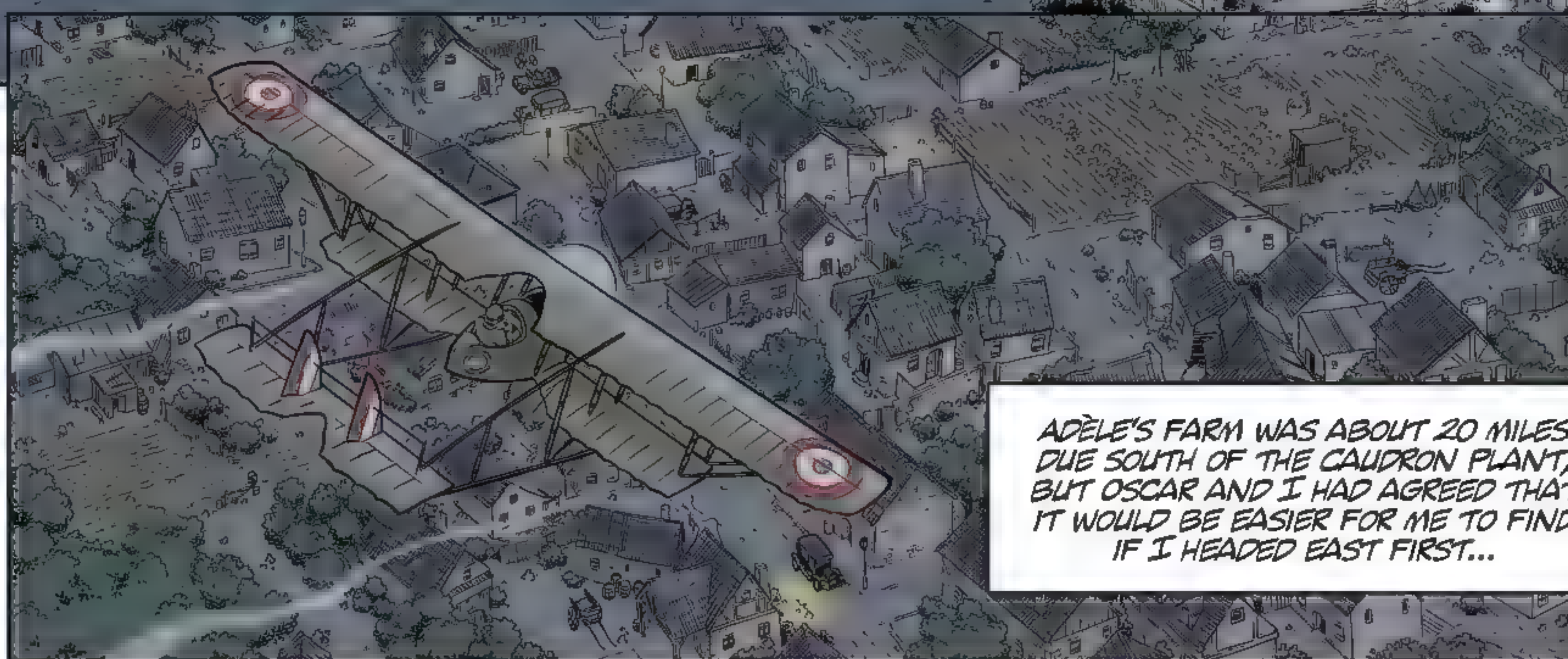
JUST LIKE IN AFRICA!



THANK GOD!

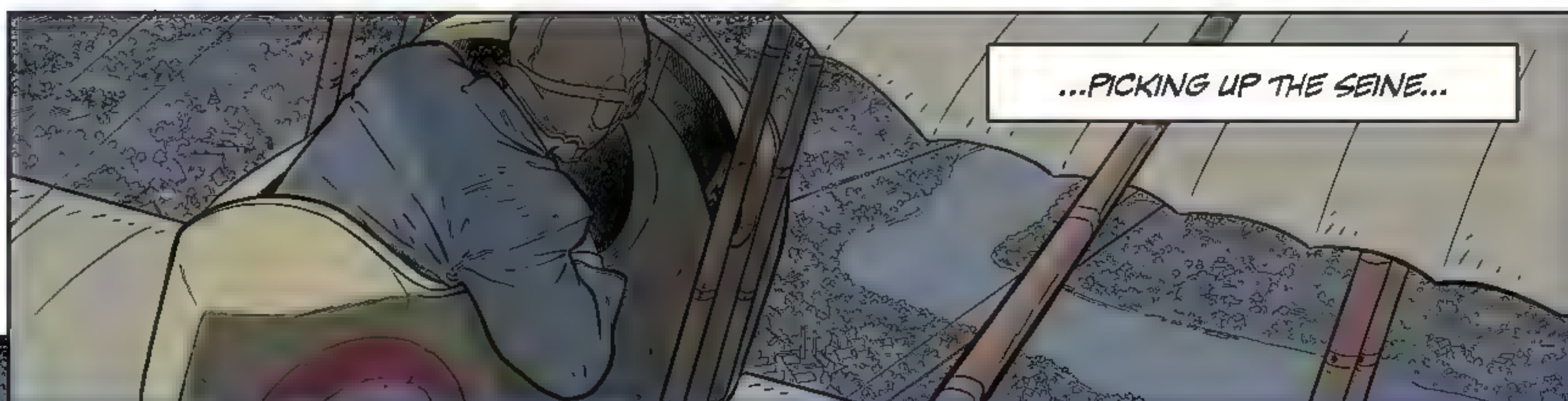
I NEEDN'T HAVE WORRIED THAT I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE PLANE-- SHE RESPONDED READILY, AND I IMMEDIATELY SET MY COURSE EASTWARD.

WHAAAAOOO

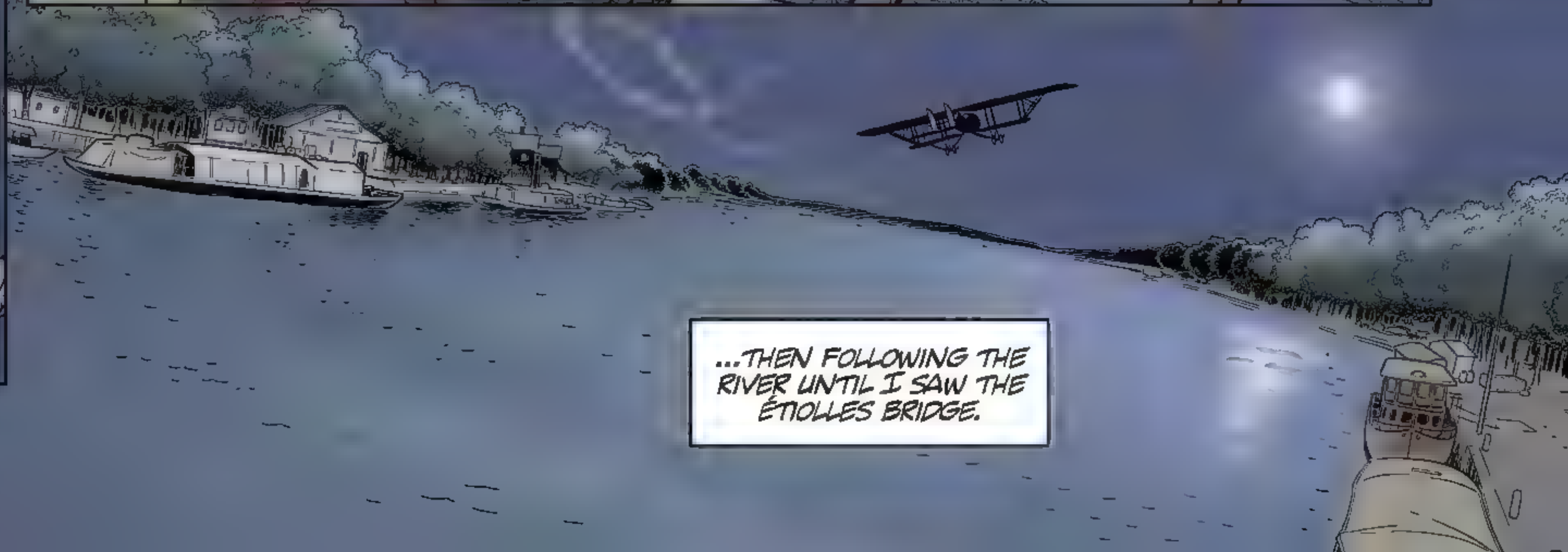


ADELE'S FARM WAS ABOUT 20 MILES DUE SOUTH OF THE CAUDRON PLANT, BUT OSCAR AND I HAD AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE EASIER FOR ME TO FIND IF I HEADED EAST FIRST...

...PICKING UP THE SEINE...

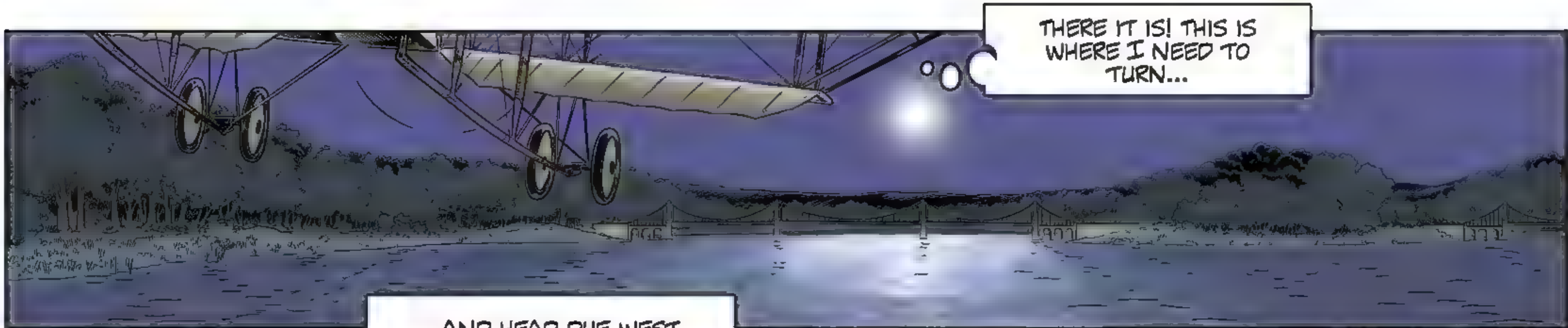


...THEN FOLLOWING THE RIVER UNTIL I SAW THE ÉTIOLLES BRIDGE.



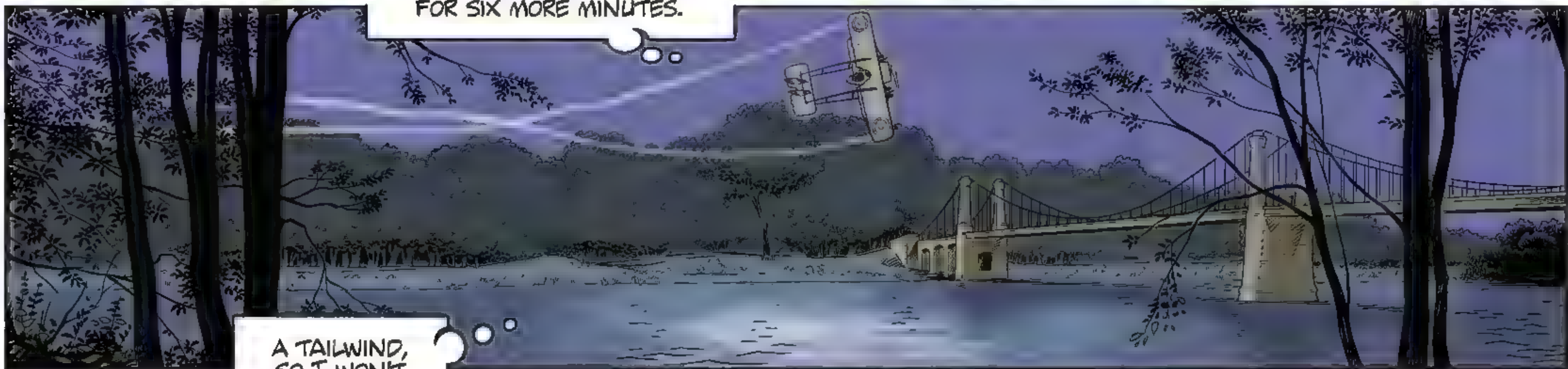
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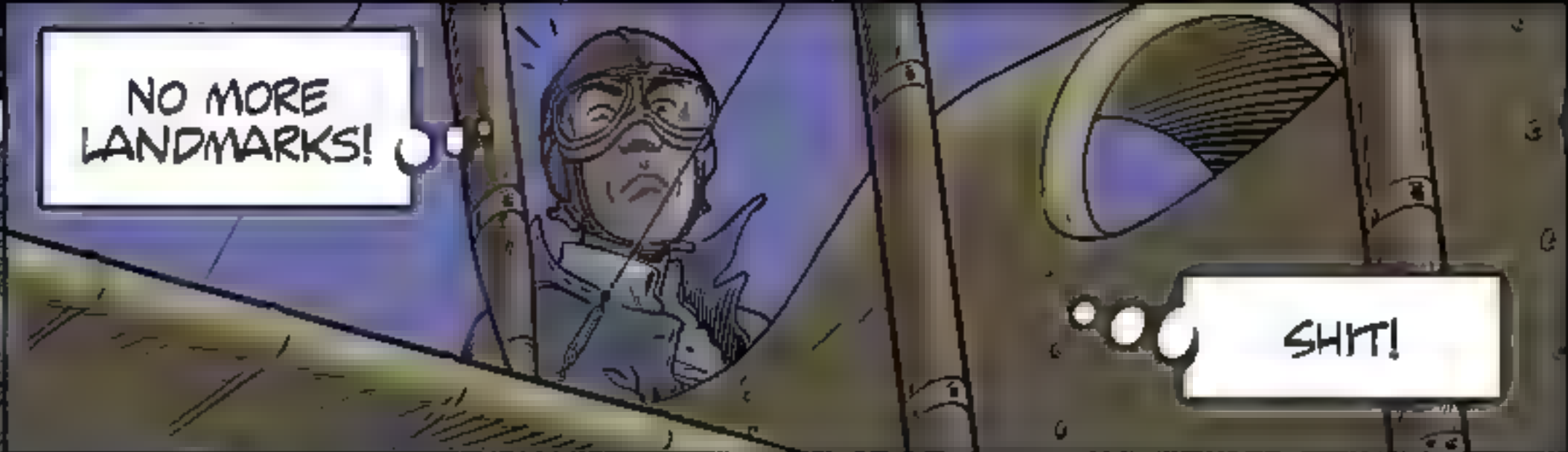
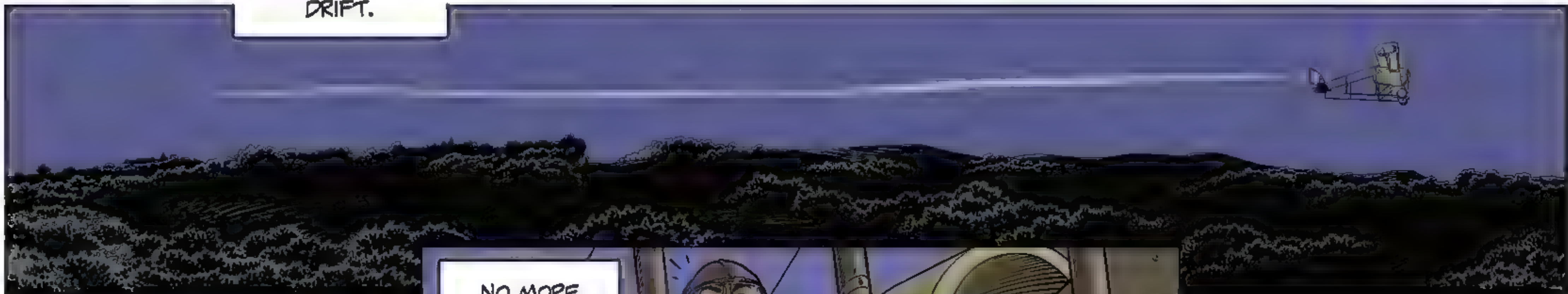


THERE IT IS! THIS IS
WHERE I NEED TO
TURN...

...AND HEAD DUE WEST
FOR SIX MORE MINUTES.

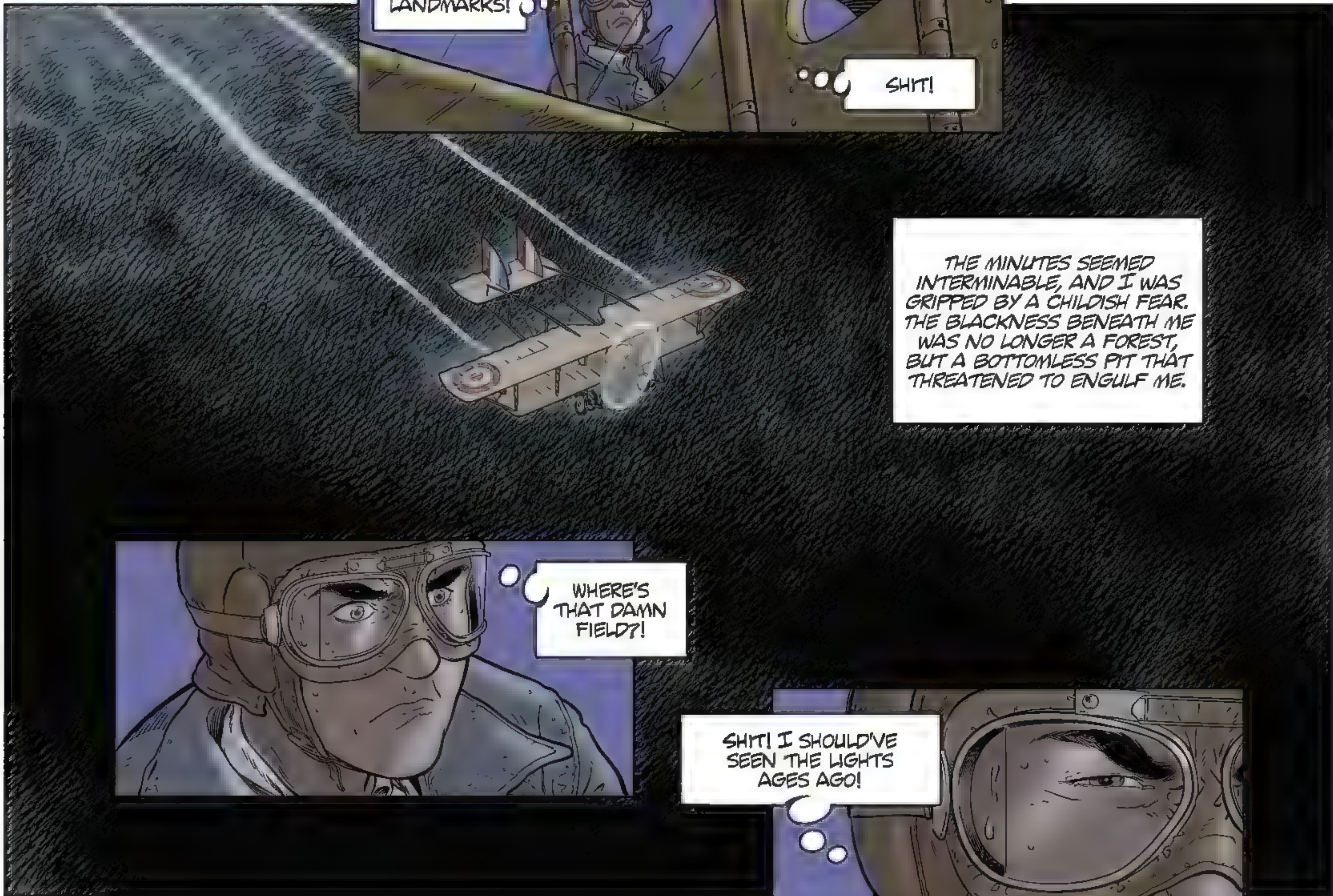


A TAILWIND,
SO I WON'T
DRIFT.

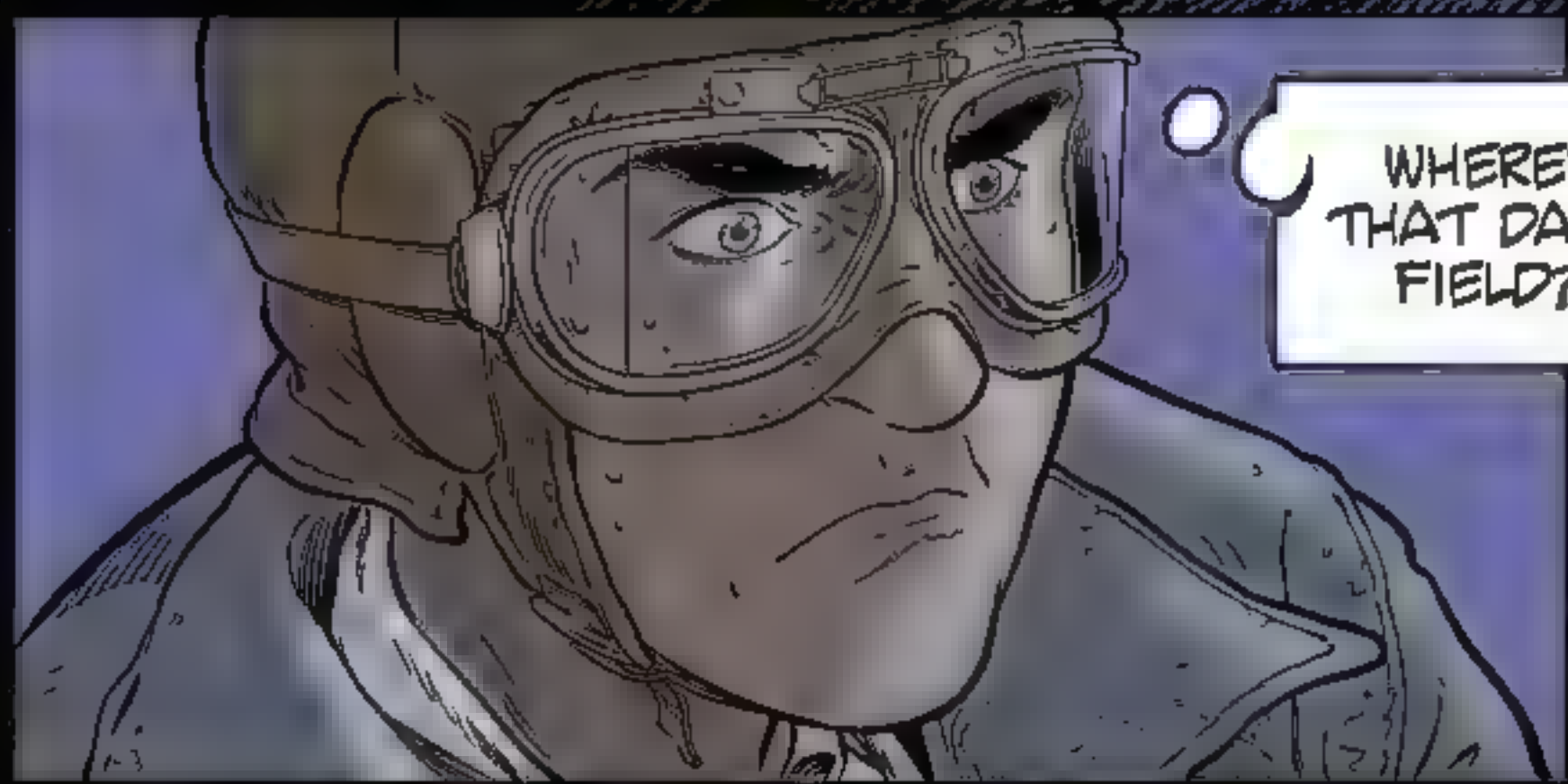


NO MORE
LANDMARKS!

SHIT!

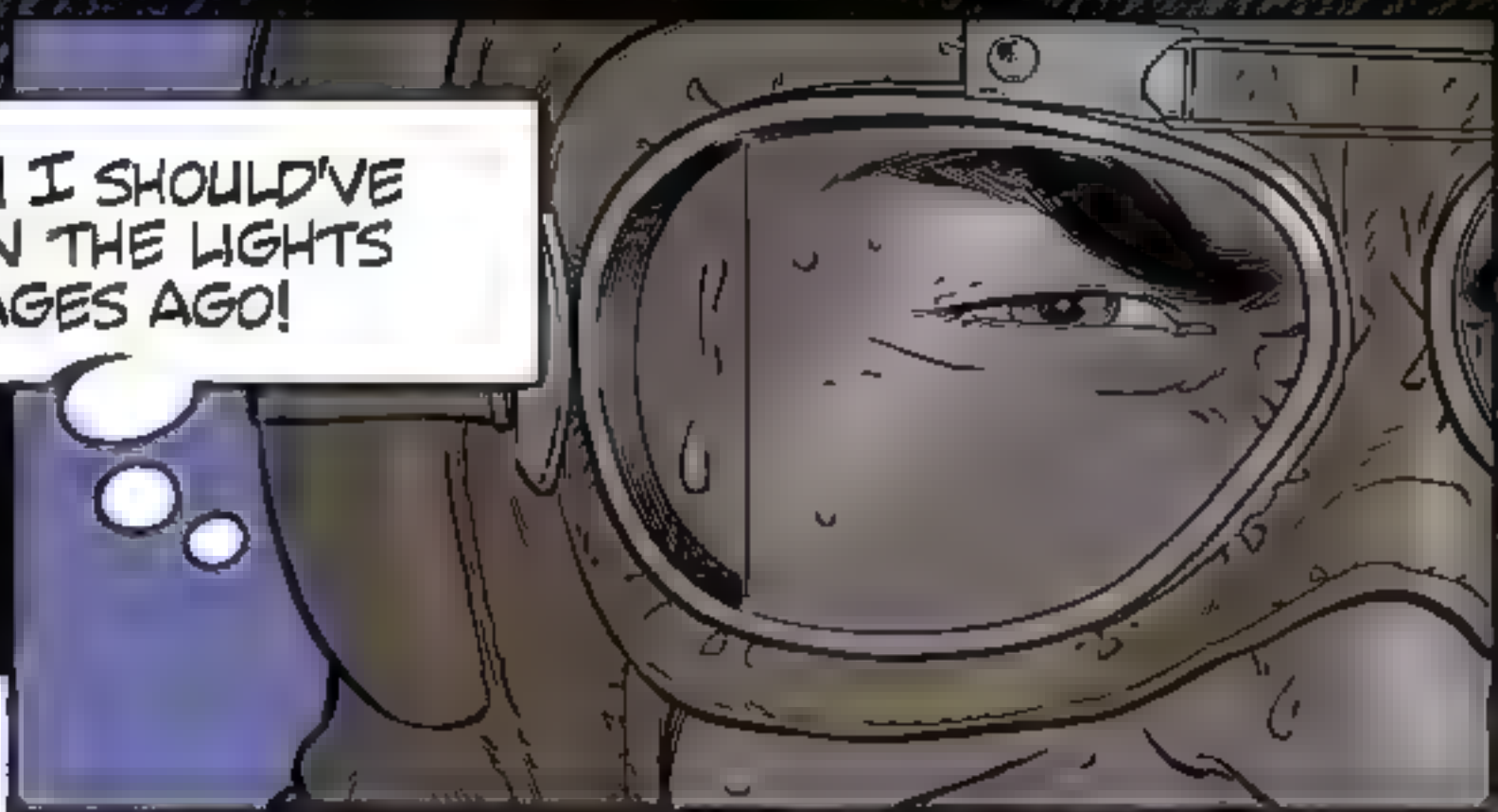


THE MINUTES SEEMED
INTERMINABLE, AND I WAS
GRIPPED BY A CHILDISH FEAR.
THE BLACKNESS BENEATH ME
WAS NO LONGER A FOREST,
BUT A BOTTOMLESS PIT THAT
THREATENED TO ENGULF ME.



WHERE'S
THAT DAMN
FIELD?!

SHIT! I SHOULD'VE
SEEN THE LIGHTS
AGES AGO!





THERE!!



MADE IT!

THANKS, MOSES!

I FLEW OVER THE LANDING STRIP AND TURNED BACK INTO THE WIND TO LINE MYSELF UP WITH THE BURNING BARRELS. THIS TIME IT WASN'T "GOTT MIT UNS" (1), BUT...



GOTT MIT MIR!

BOONG

TCHRI!!!

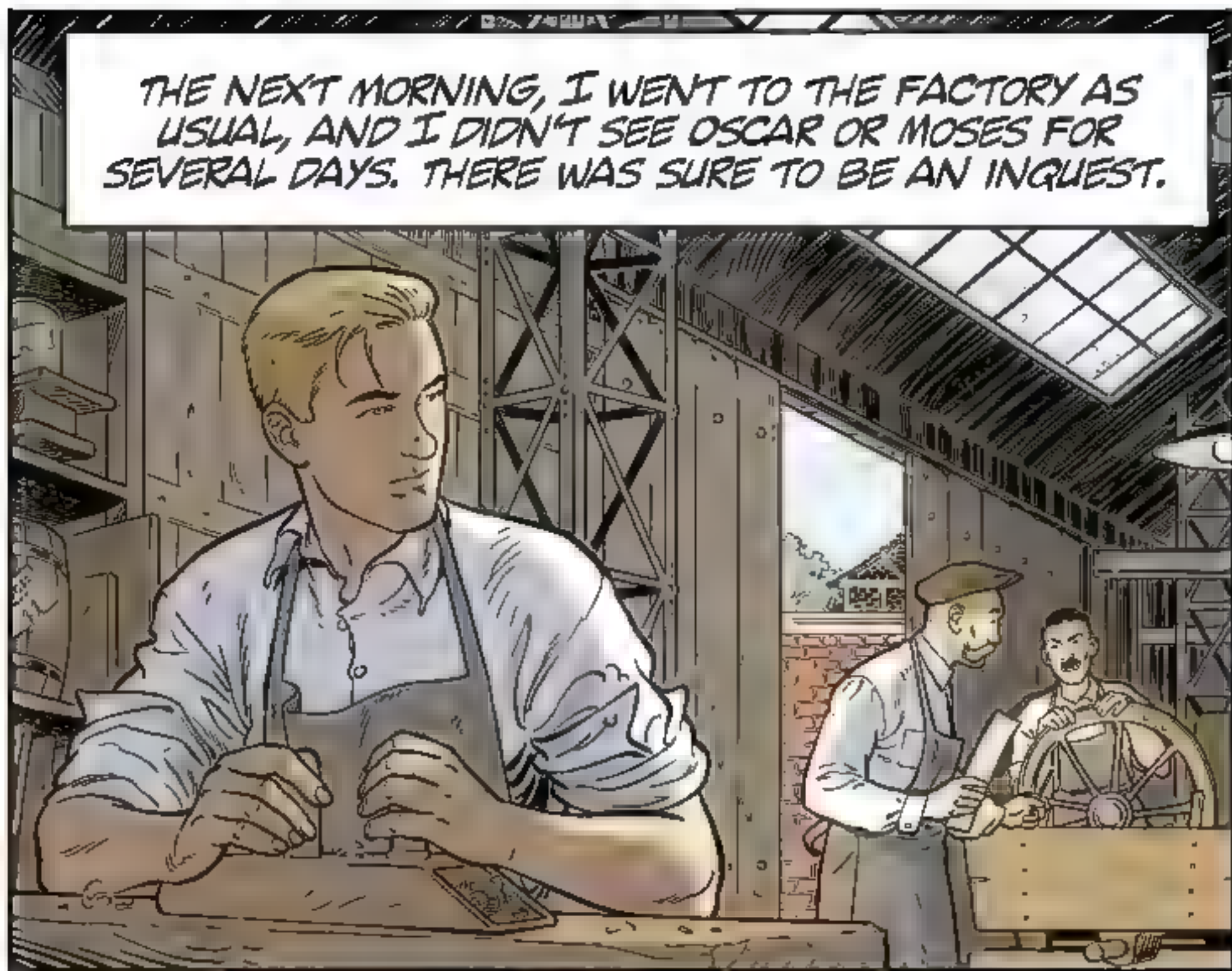


I'D DONE IT!
THANK GOD,
I'D DONE IT!!

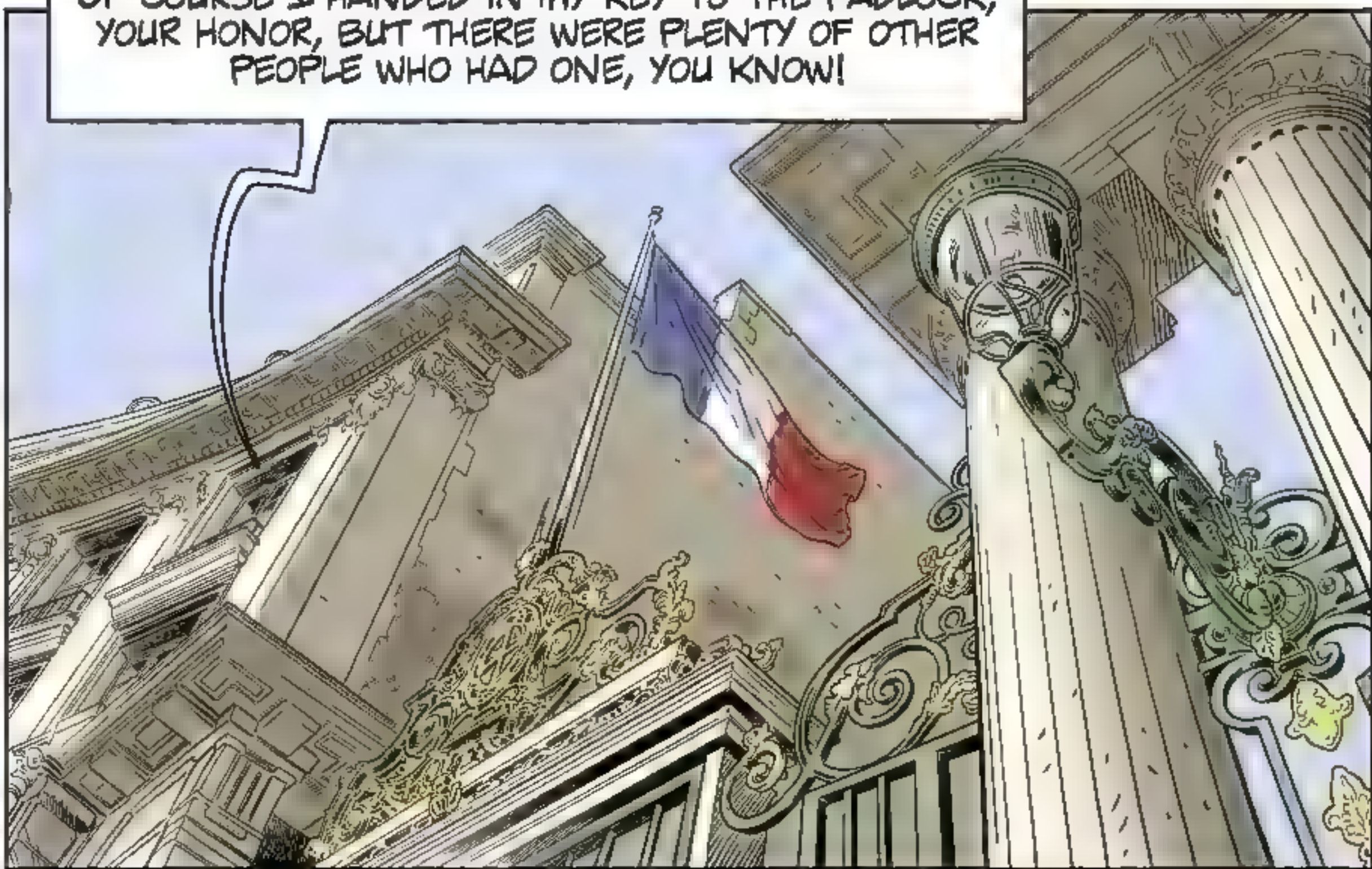


I WAS SO THRILLED THAT I DIDN'T HEAR WHAT MOSES WAS SAYING, BUT I DID WONDER WHY I HADN'T NOTICED HOW BEAUTIFUL ADELE WAS THE FIRST TIME I'D SEEN HER.

(1) "GOD BE WITH US." THE NAME OF JOSEF'S FATHER'S PLANE (SEE VOLUME 1, "TAKE-OFF").



THE NEXT MORNING, I WENT TO THE FACTORY AS USUAL, AND I DIDN'T SEE OSCAR OR MOSES FOR SEVERAL DAYS. THERE WAS SURE TO BE AN INQUEST.



OF COURSE I HANDED IN MY KEY TO THE PADLOCK, YOUR HONOR, BUT THERE WERE PLENTY OF OTHER PEOPLE WHO HAD ONE, YOU KNOW!



ANYWAY, HOW COULD I POSSIBLY STEAL AN AIRPLANE? I CAN'T FLY!

AND AT NIGHT? YOU'D HAVE TO BE AN ACE... OR CRAZY!

HOW ABOUT AN ACCOMPLICE?



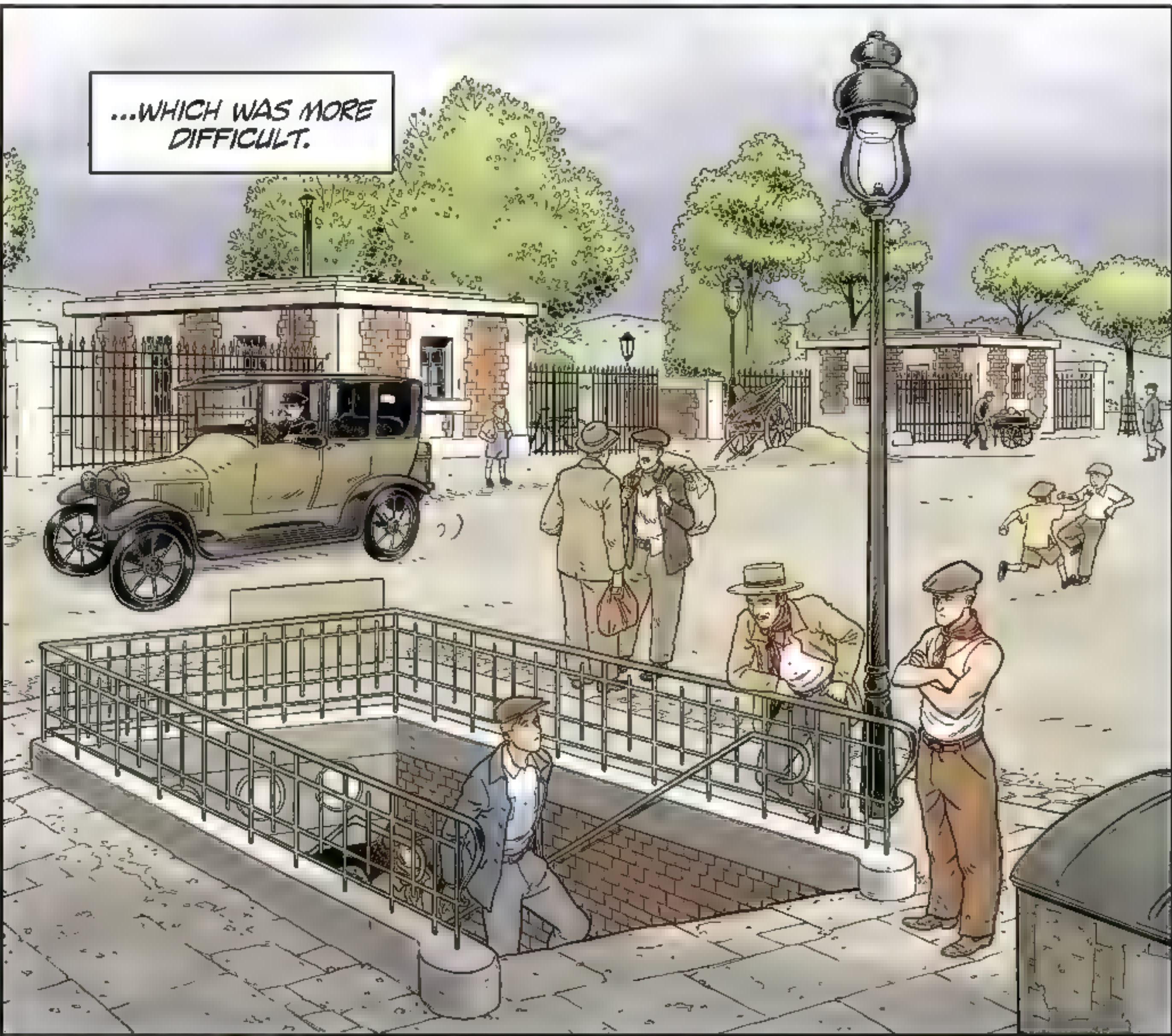
IT'S JUST SOMETHING I TOLD EVERYONE TO IMPRESS THEM, YOUR HONOR--BUT NO, I DON'T KNOW HOW TO FLY, I SWEAR!



SOON, THOUGH, I HOPE! I'M SAVING UP TO GET MY PILOT'S LICENSE!



HAVING SUCCESSFULLY CARRIED OUT THE FIRST PART OF MY PLAN, I NOW HAD TO IMPLEMENT THE SECOND PART...



...WHICH WAS MORE DIFFICULT.

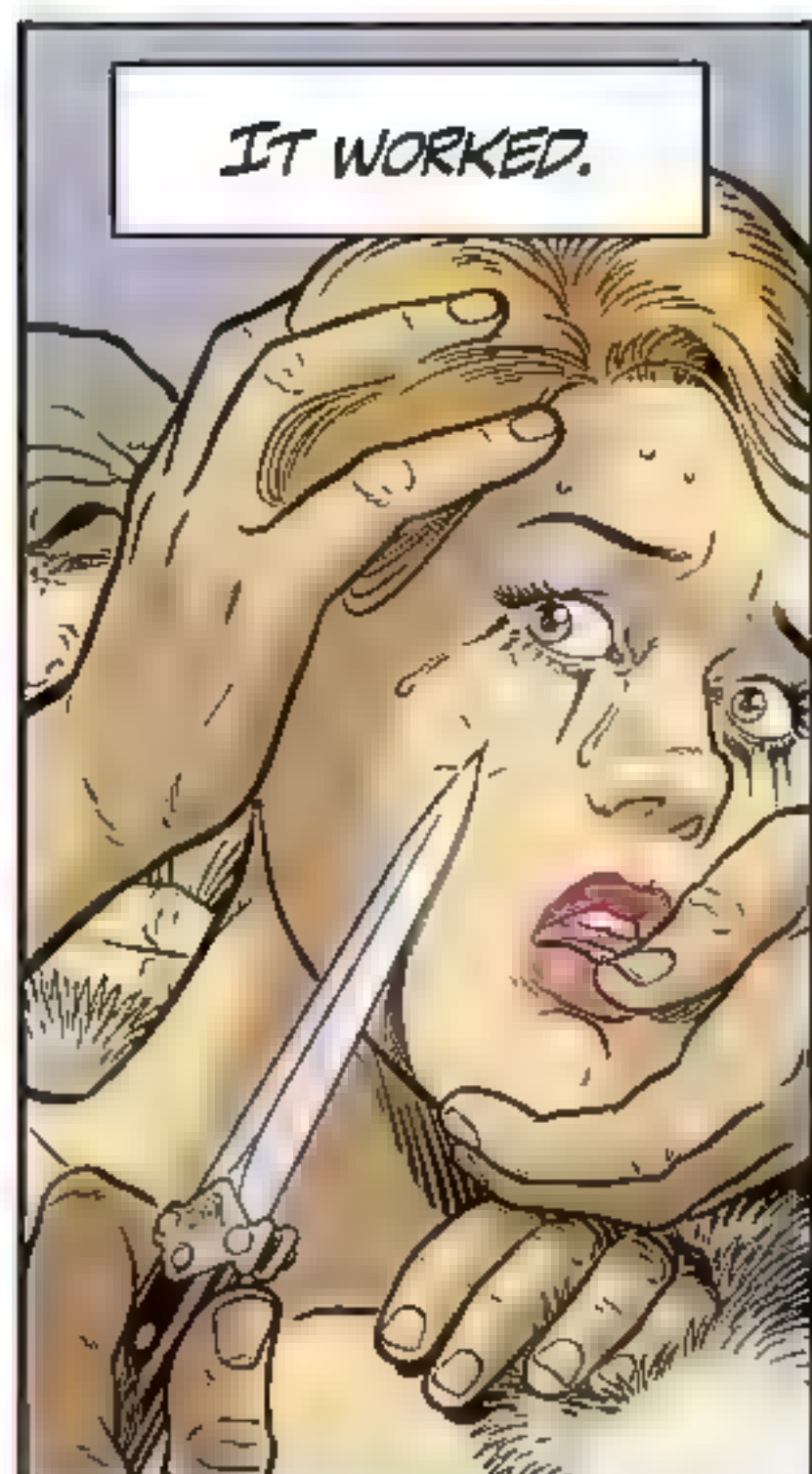


I HAD TO CONVINCE EUSTACHE! MOSES HAD ARRANGED FOR US TO MEET IN HIS "KINGDOM" IN THE DILAPIDATED FORTIFICATIONS IN SAINT-OUEN, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF PARIS.

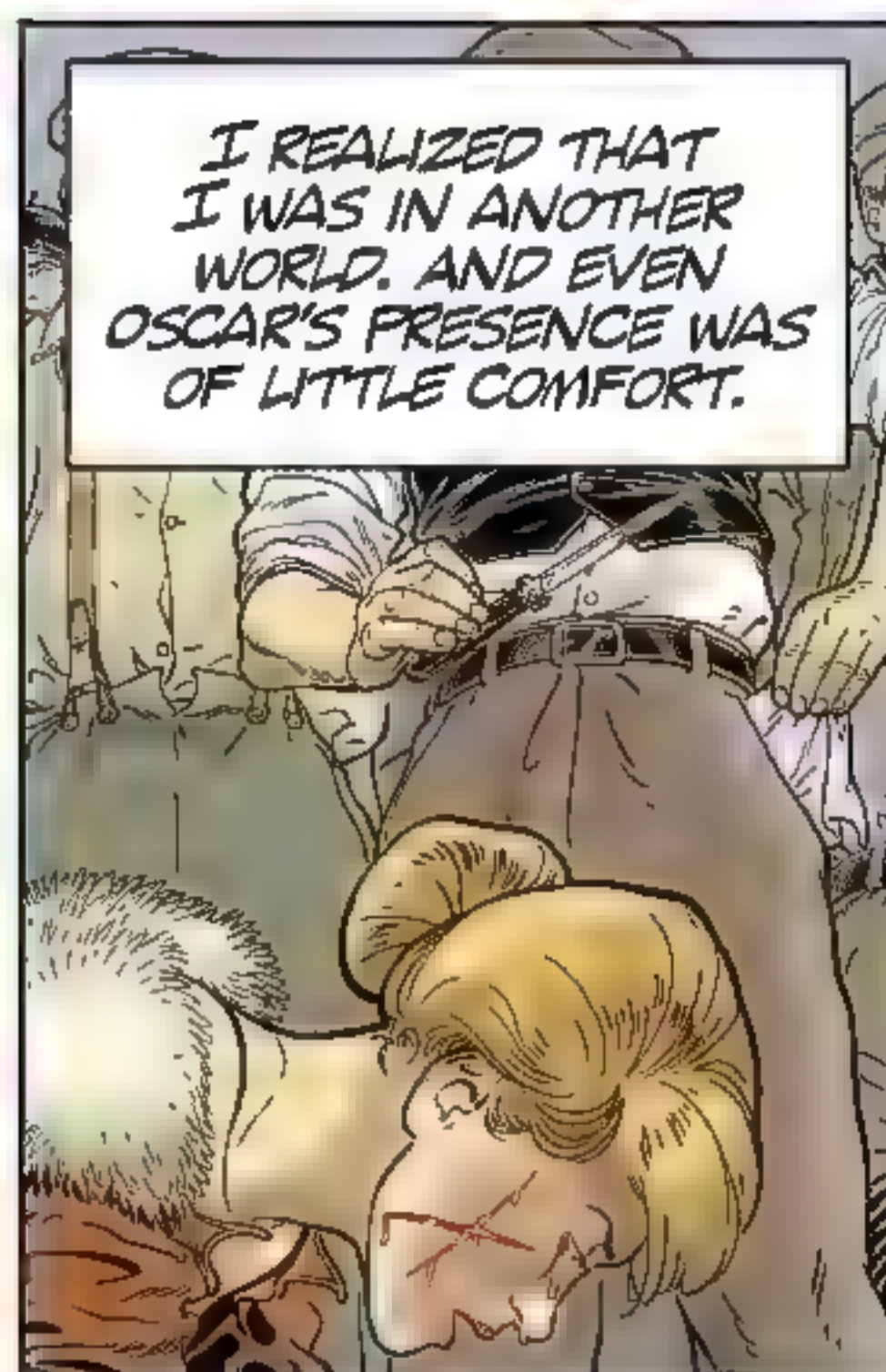


AND AS I ARRIVED, THE "KING" WAS DISHING OUT JUSTICE--NO DOUBT TO IMPRESS ME.

NOOO!
MERCY!!!



IT WORKED.



I REALIZED THAT I WAS IN ANOTHER WORLD. AND EVEN OSCAR'S PRESENCE WAS OF LITTLE COMFORT.



THE TRAITOR'S CROSS (!)... THE BASTARDS!



LET'S FORGET IT, JOSEF. THEY'RE CRAZY...

TOO LATE!



OK, THE SHOW'S OVER, YOU RABBLE!

GET GOING. AND TAKE THIS WHORE AWAY!

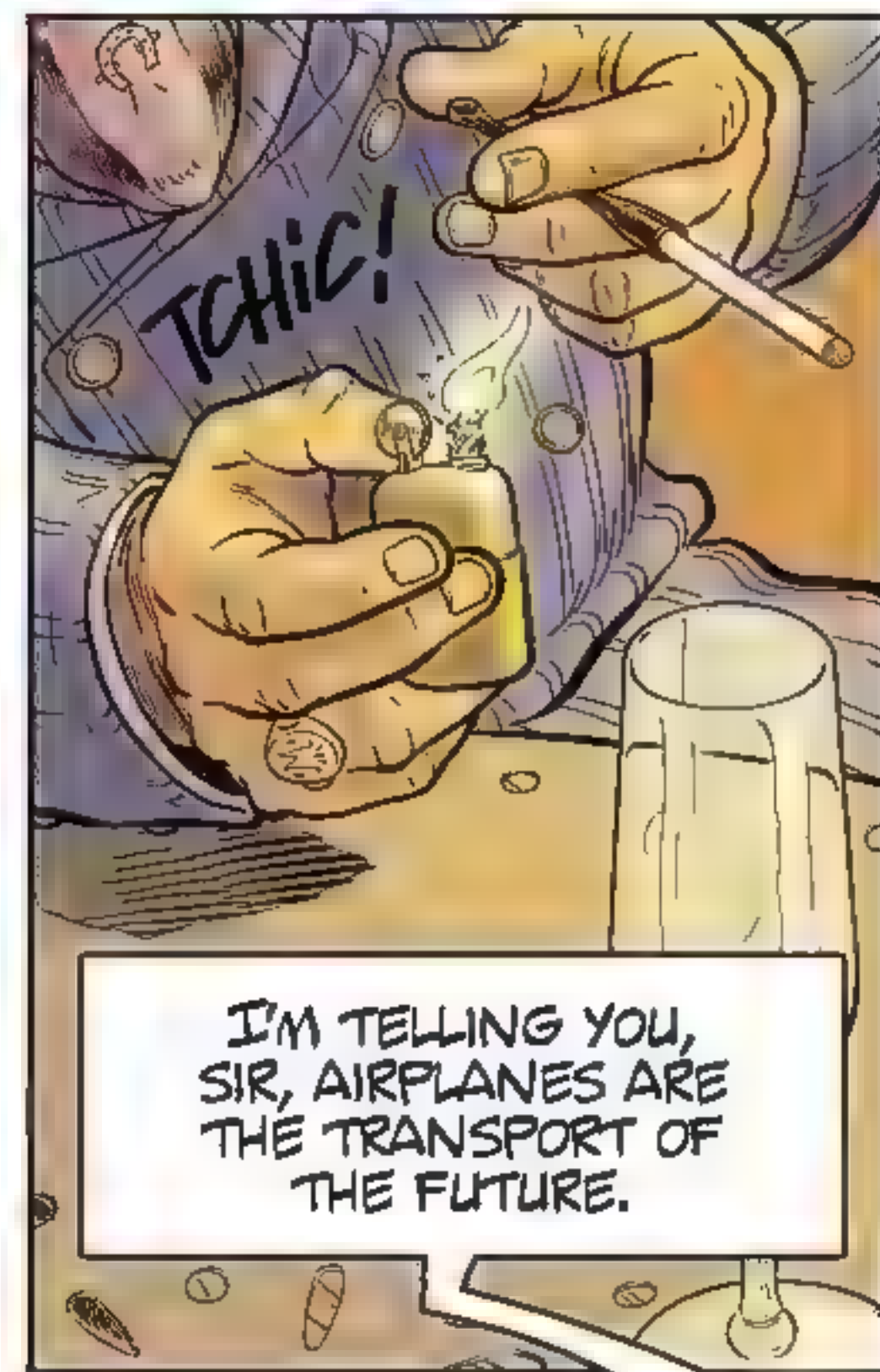
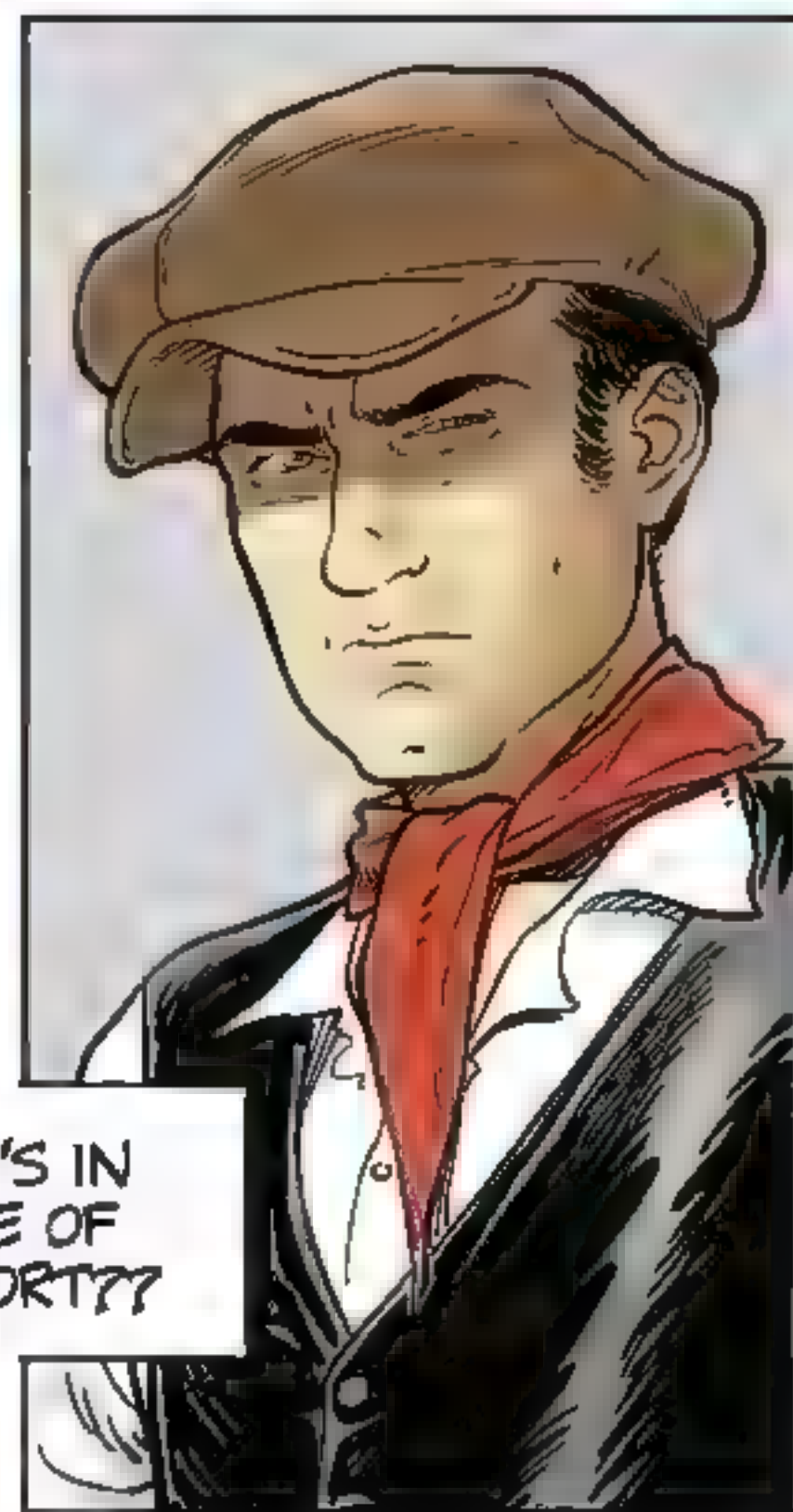
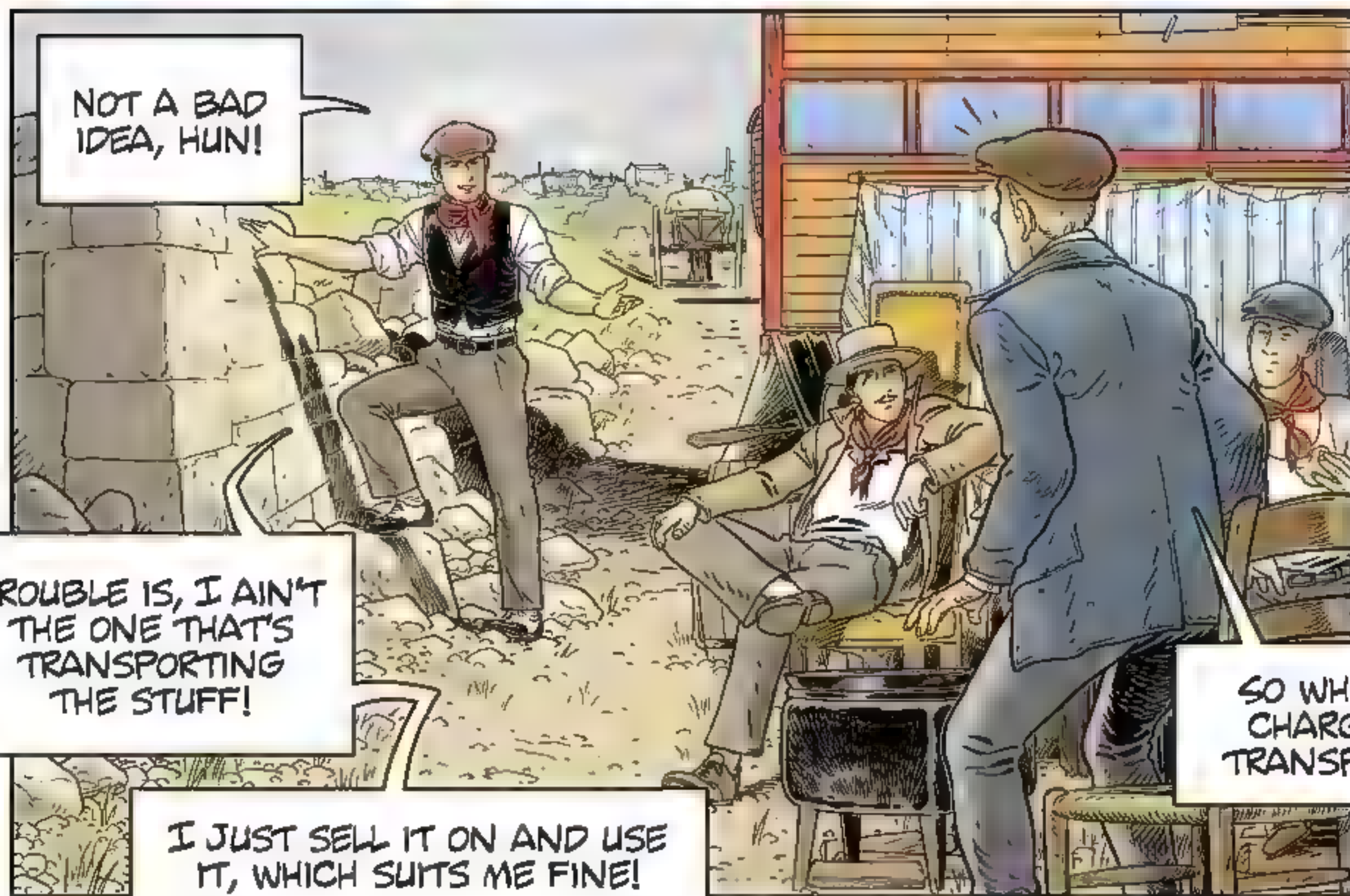
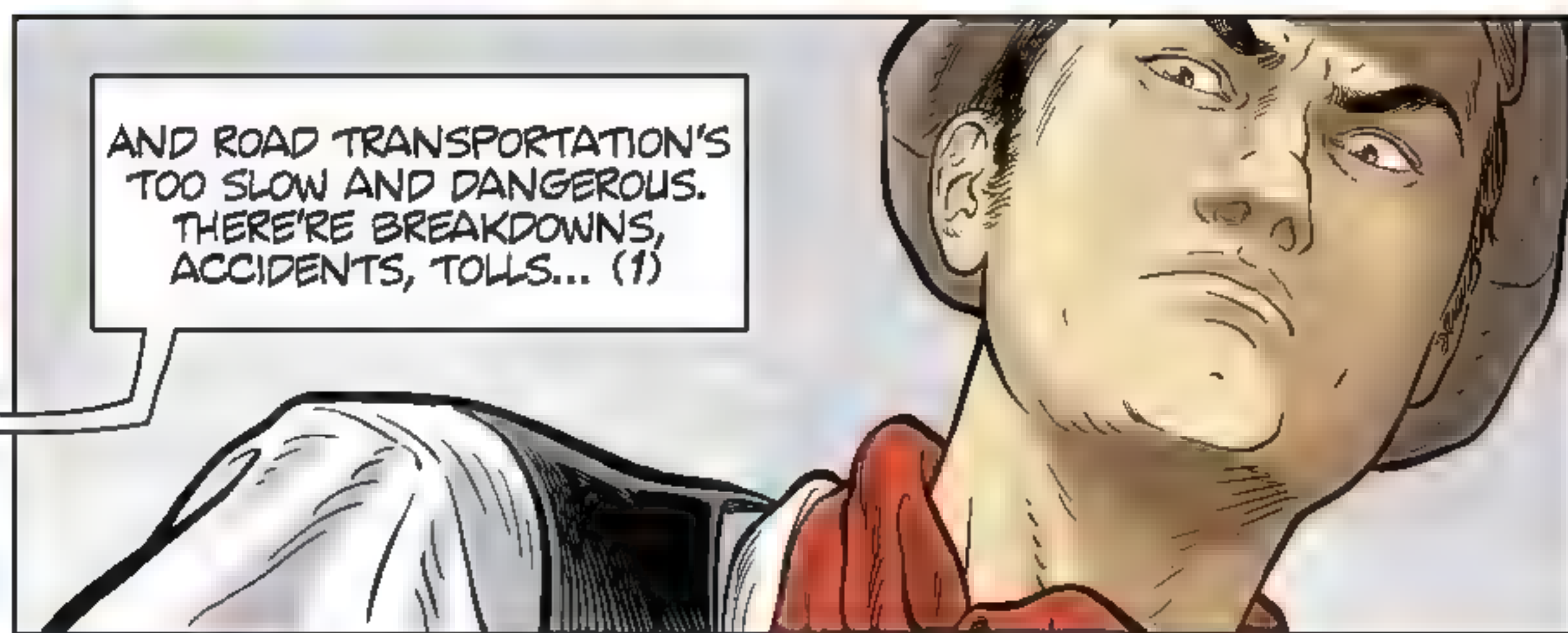
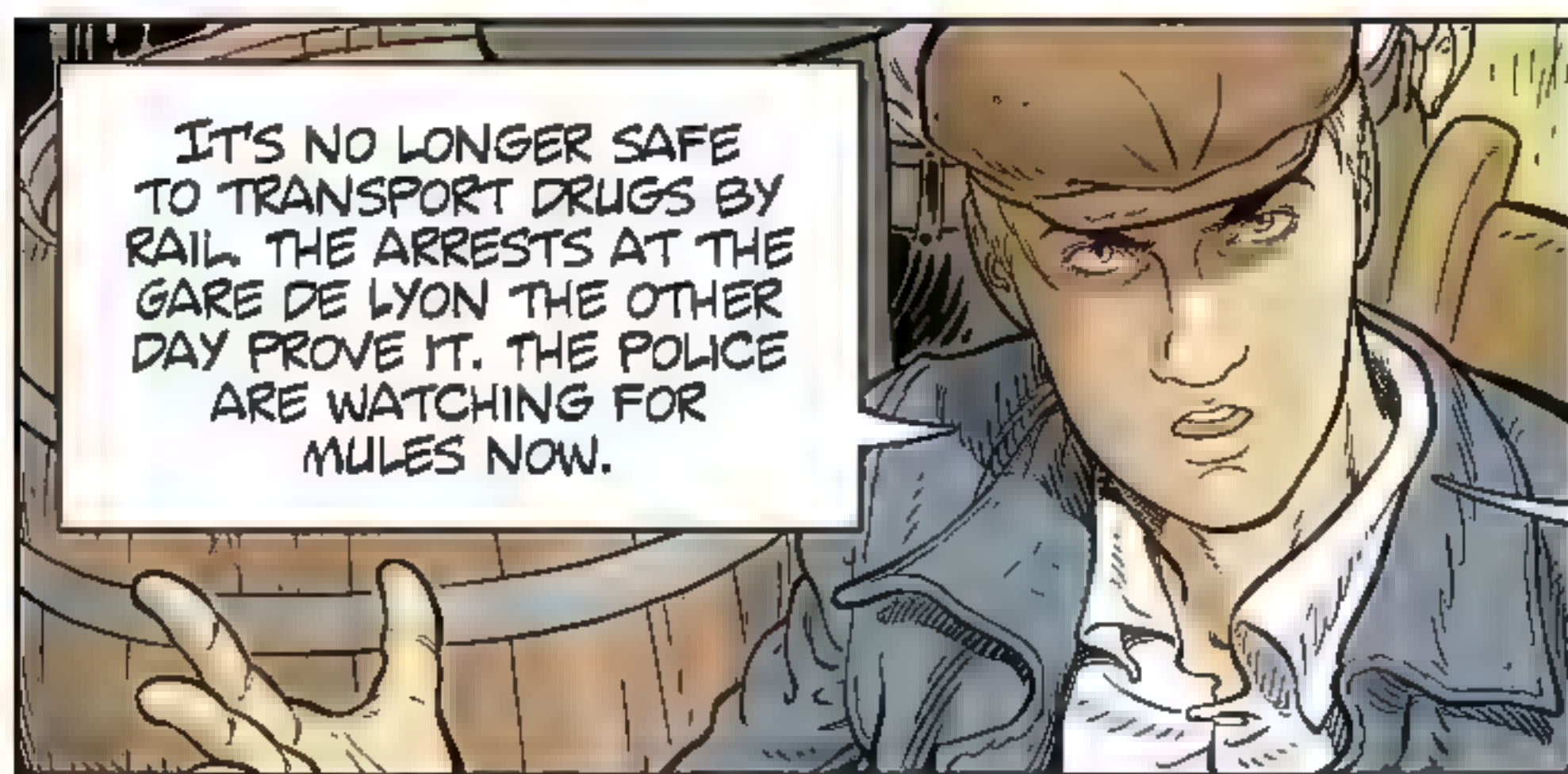
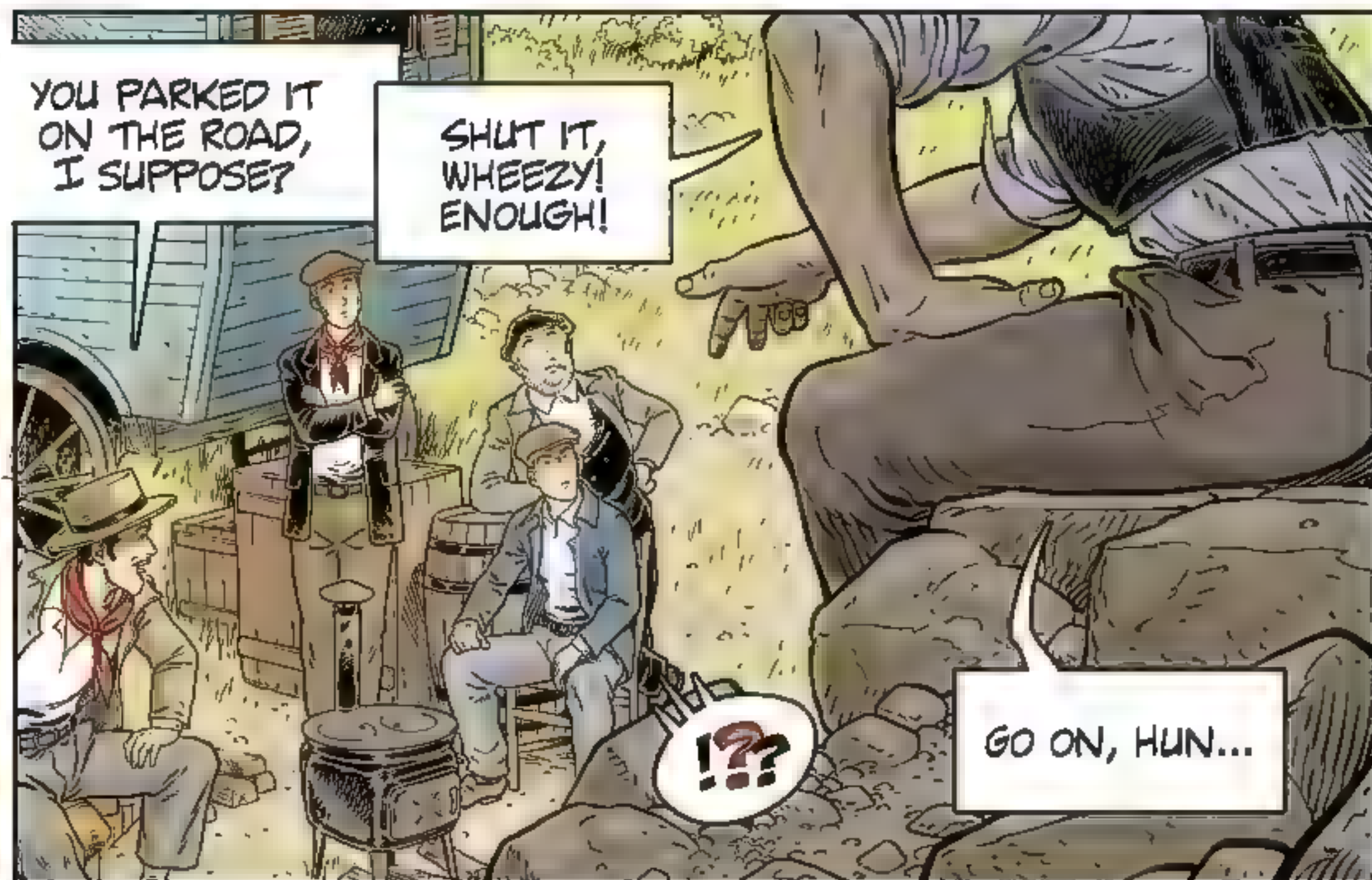
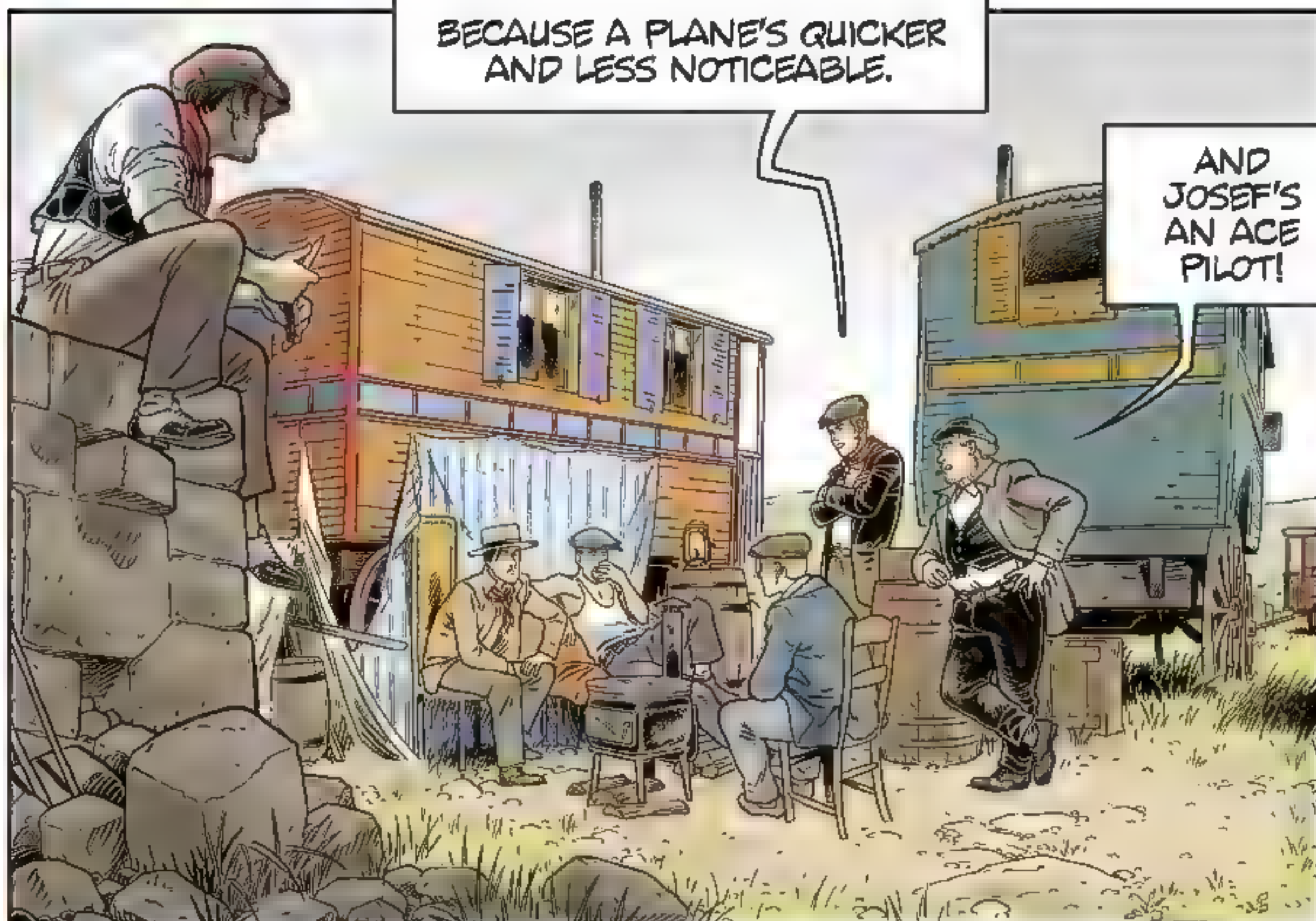
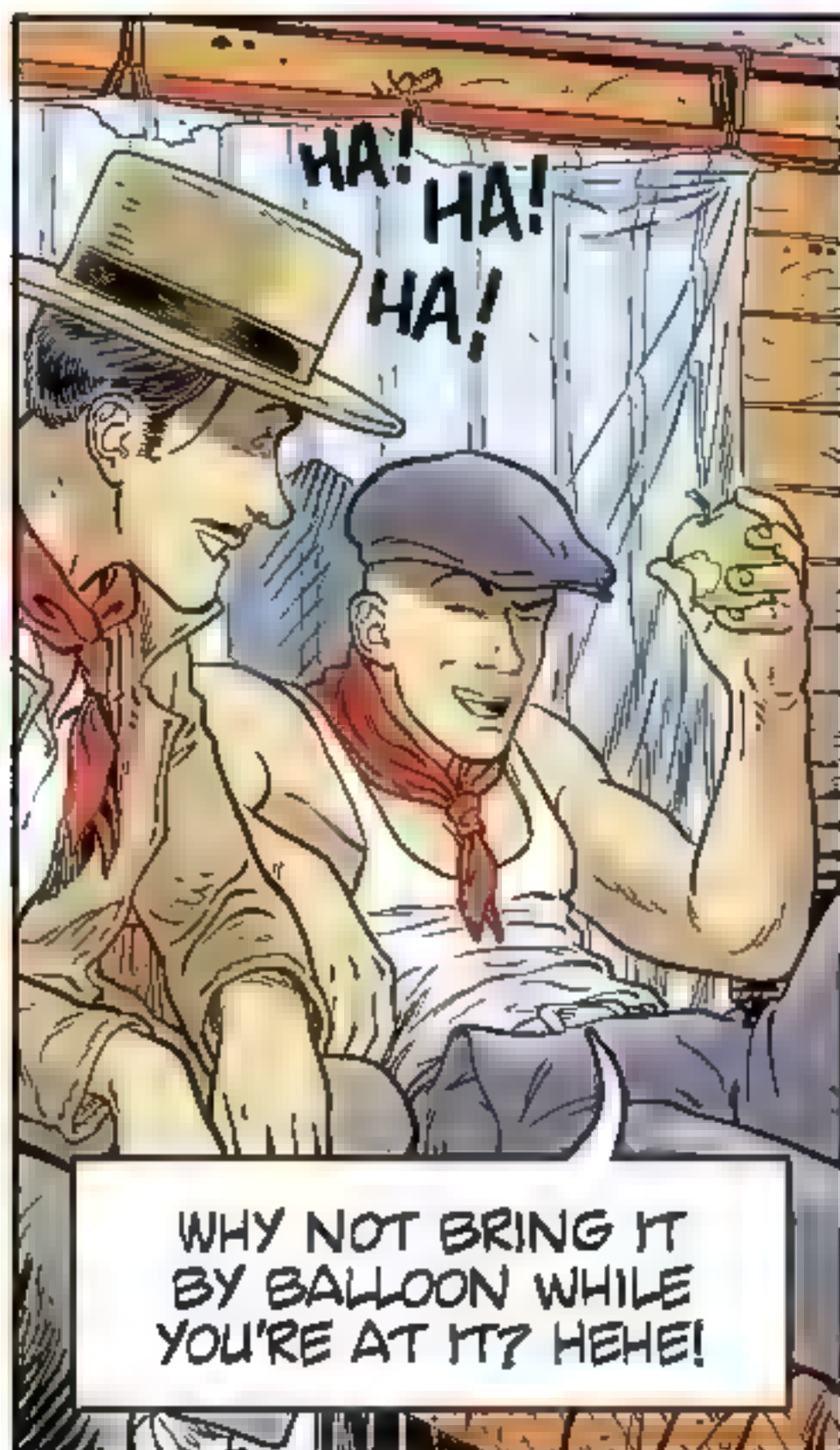


EUGÈNE! TAKE YOUR MEN TO THE SQUARE DES ÉPINETTES. IT'S PAYDAY, AND THERE'S MONEY TO BE MADE WITH LOADED DICE! I'LL JOIN YOU LATER.

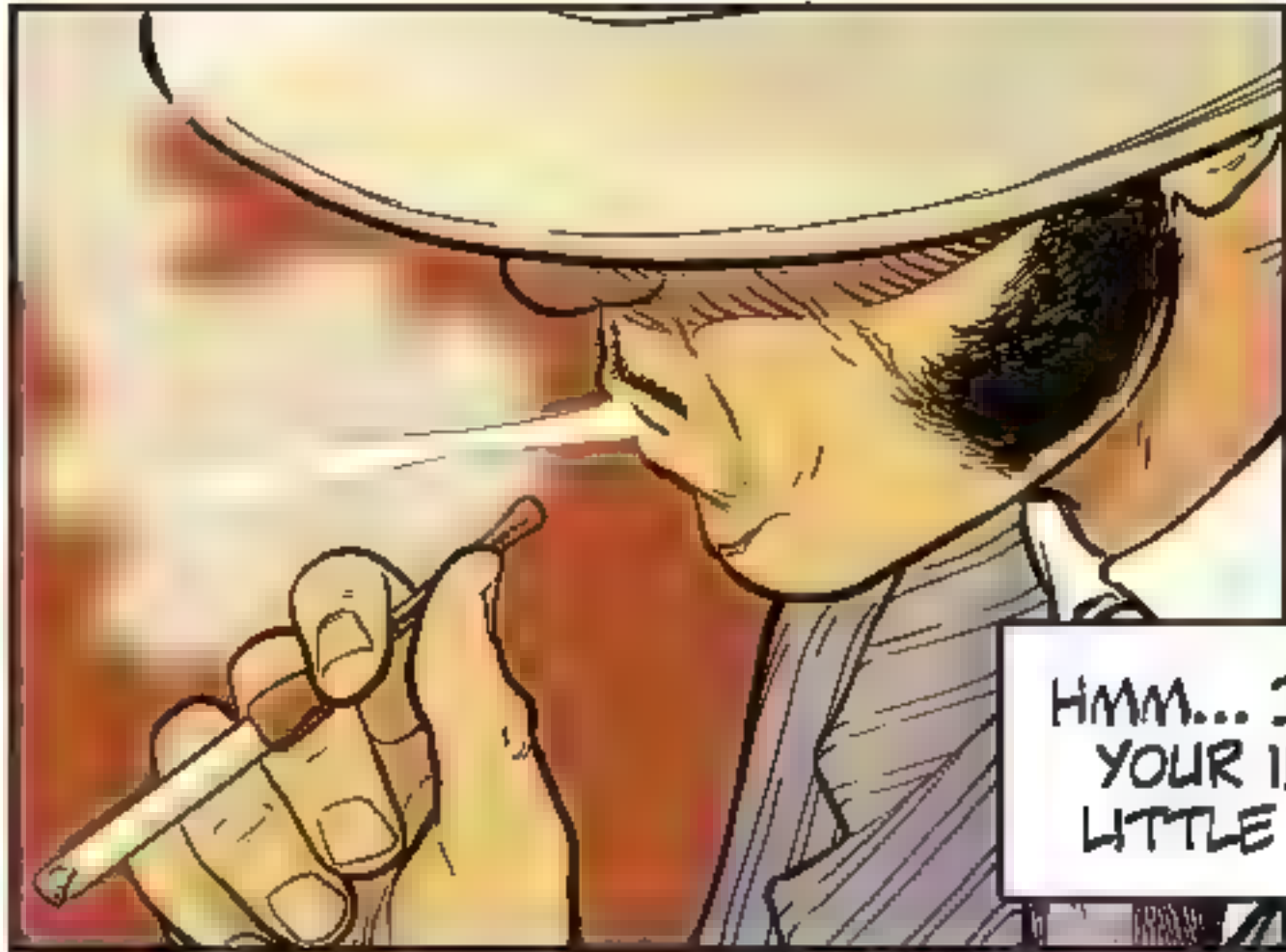
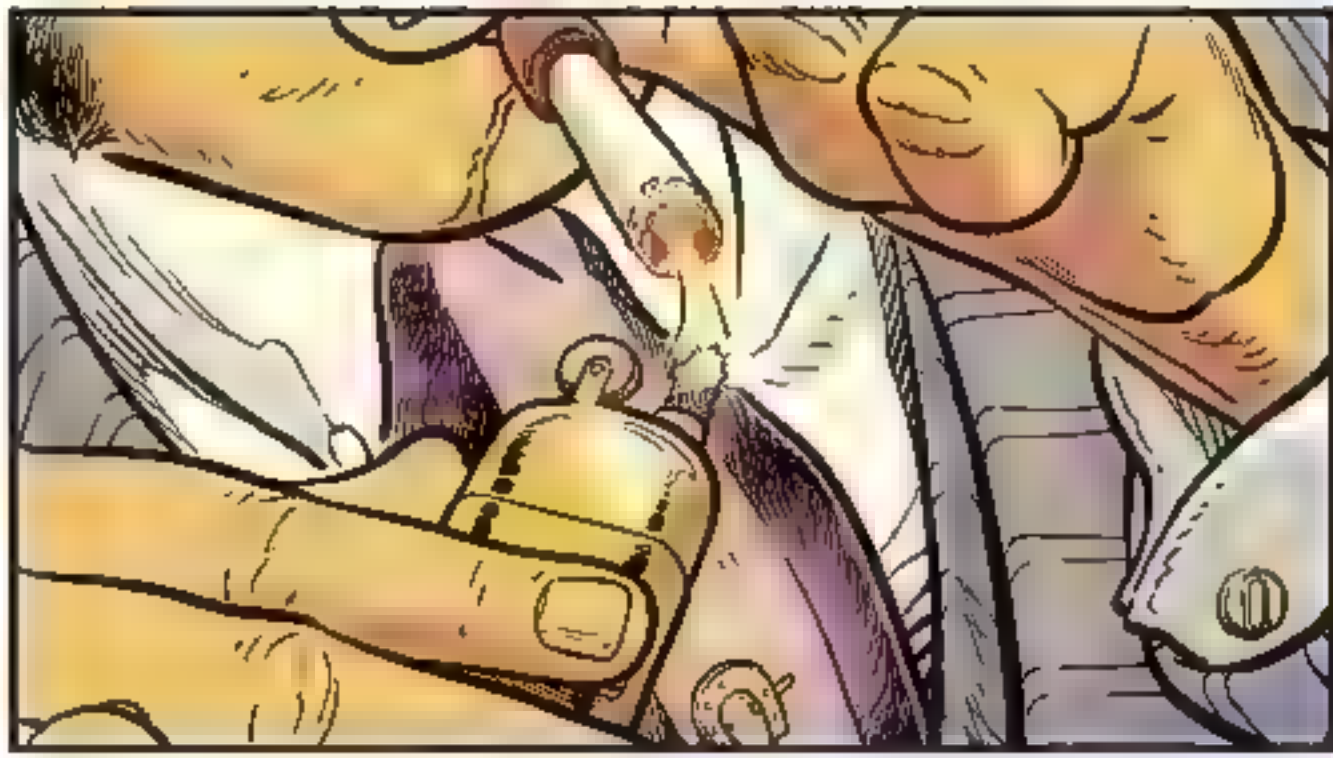


I NEED TO TALK TO THE THREE MUSKETEERS.

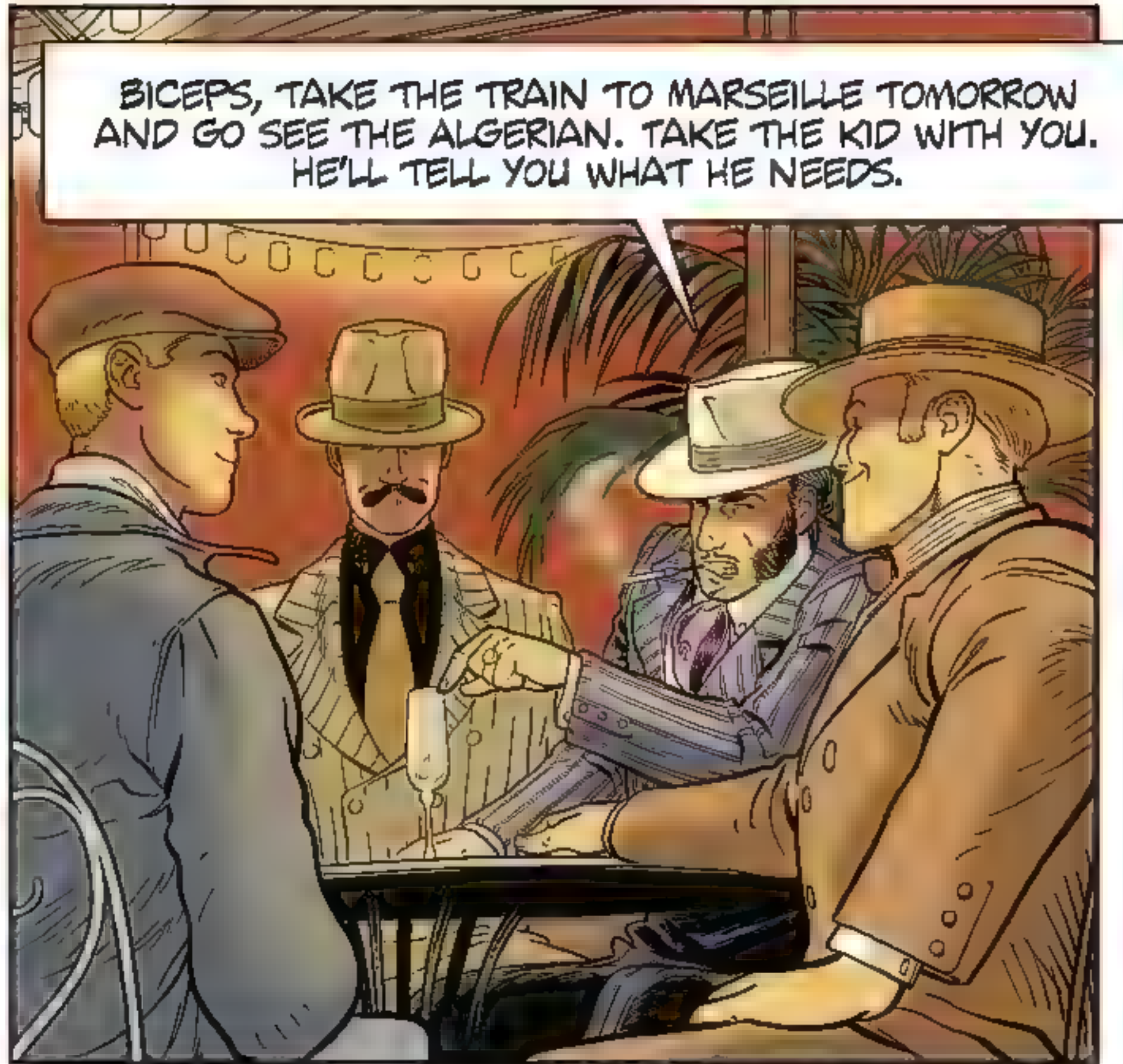
(1) A PUNISHMENT METED OUT TO INFORMERS AND DISLOYAL PROSTITUTES.



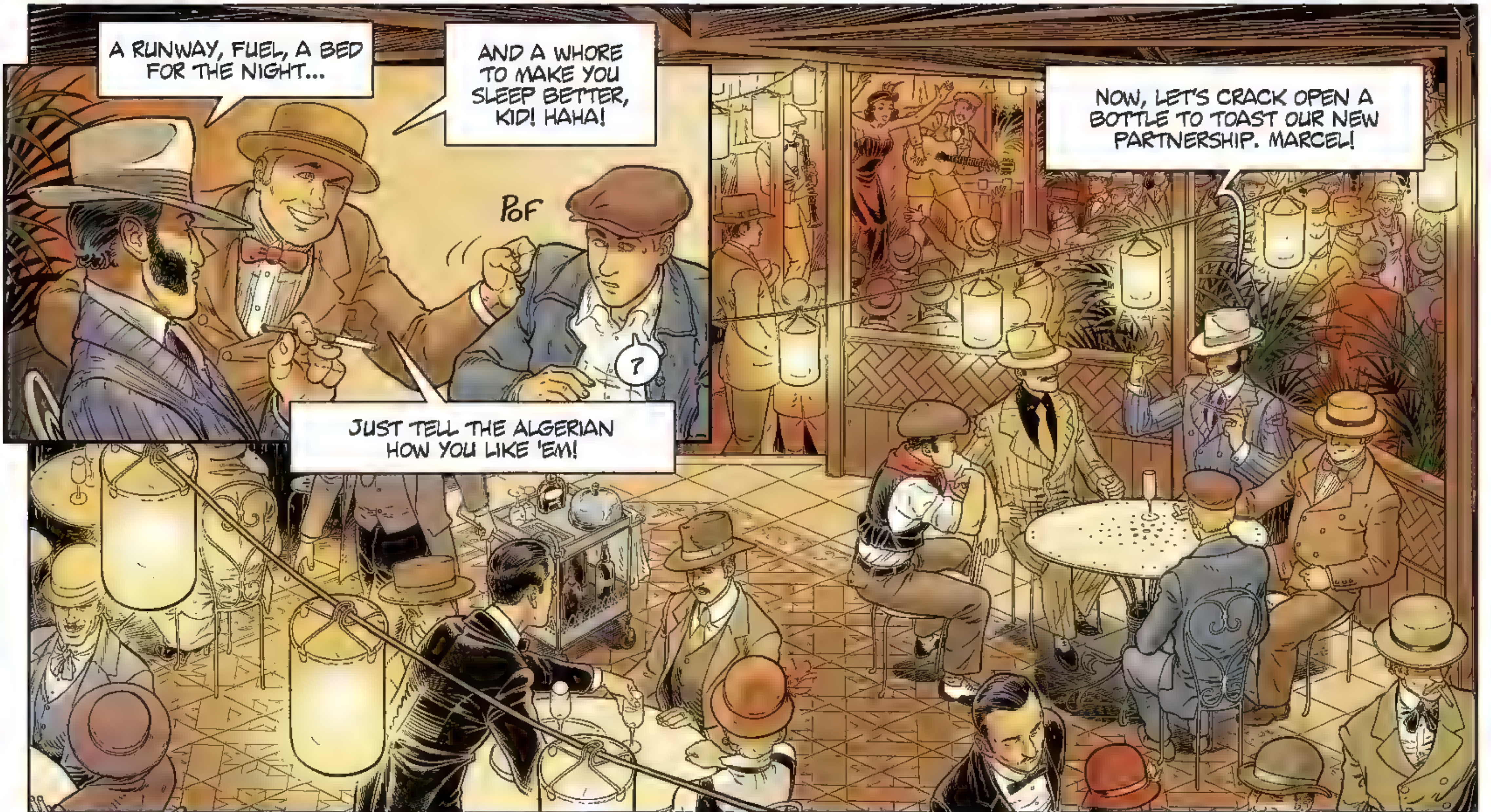
(1) ON GOODS, RATHER THAN PASSENGERS, AT THE TIME.



HMM... I LIKE
YOUR IDEA,
LITTLE GUY.



BICEPS, TAKE THE TRAIN TO MARSEILLE TOMORROW
AND GO SEE THE ALGERIAN. TAKE THE KID WITH YOU.
HE'LL TELL YOU WHAT HE NEEDS.



A RUNWAY, FUEL, A BED
FOR THE NIGHT...

AND A WHORE
TO MAKE YOU
SLEEP BETTER,
KID! HAHA!

Pof

JUST TELL THE ALGERIAN
HOW YOU LIKE 'EM!

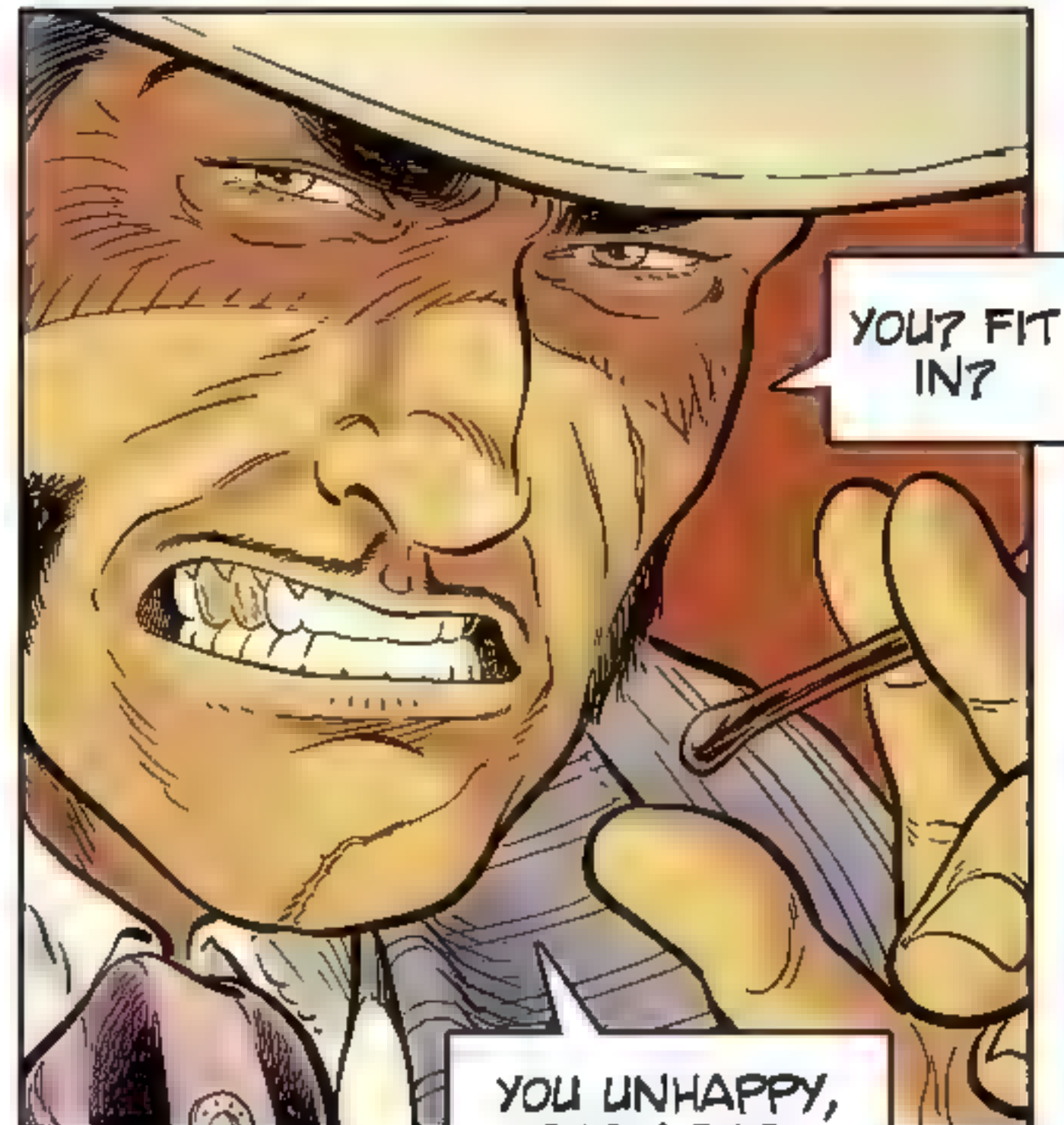
NOW, LET'S CRACK OPEN A
BOTTLE TO TOAST OUR NEW
PARTNERSHIP. MARCEL!



STICK WITH US AND
YOU'LL SOON BE FLUSH,
LITTLE GUY!

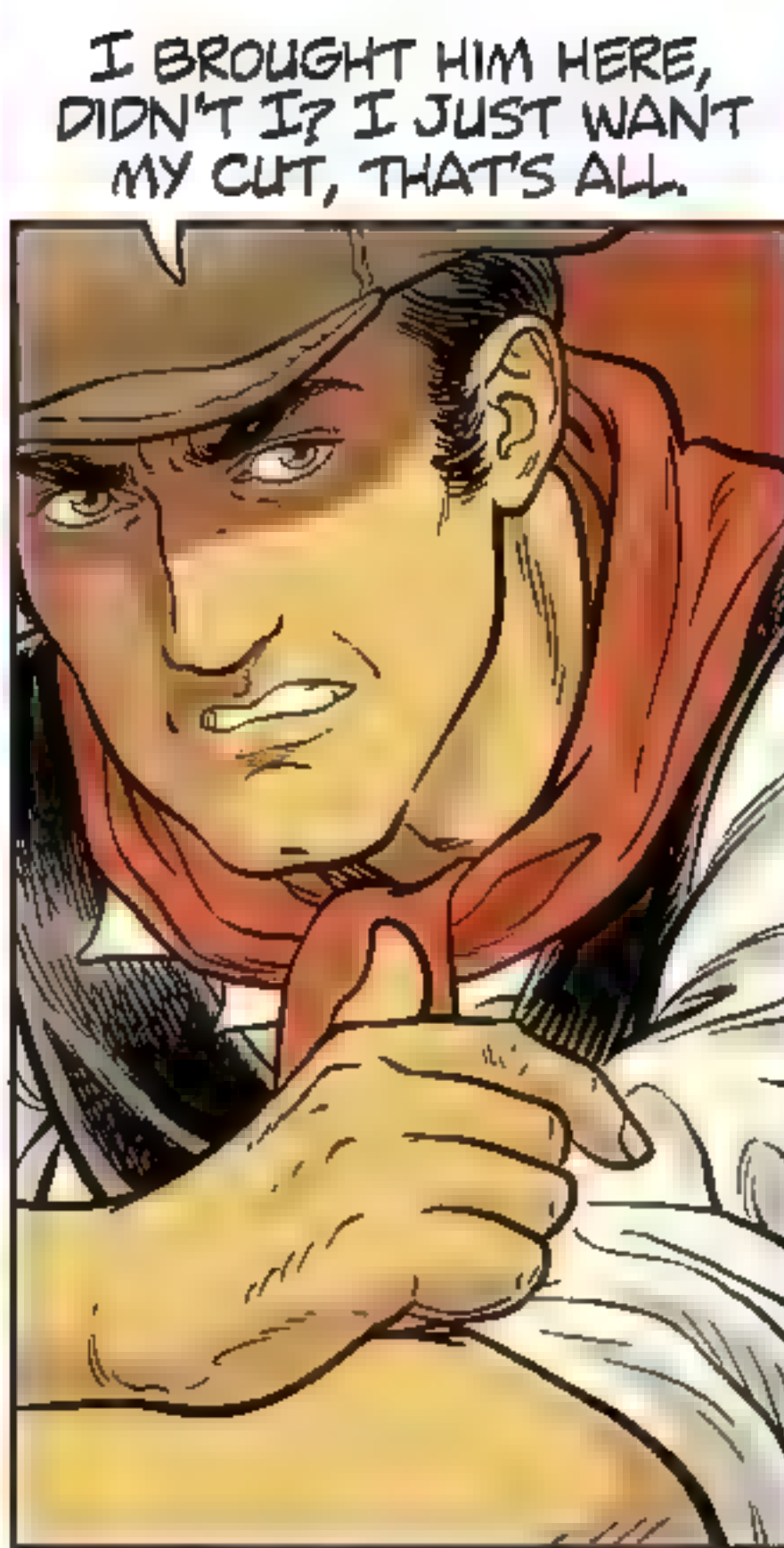


SO WHERE
DO I FIT IN,
MILO?



YOU? FIT
IN?

YOU UNHAPPY,
EUSTACHE?



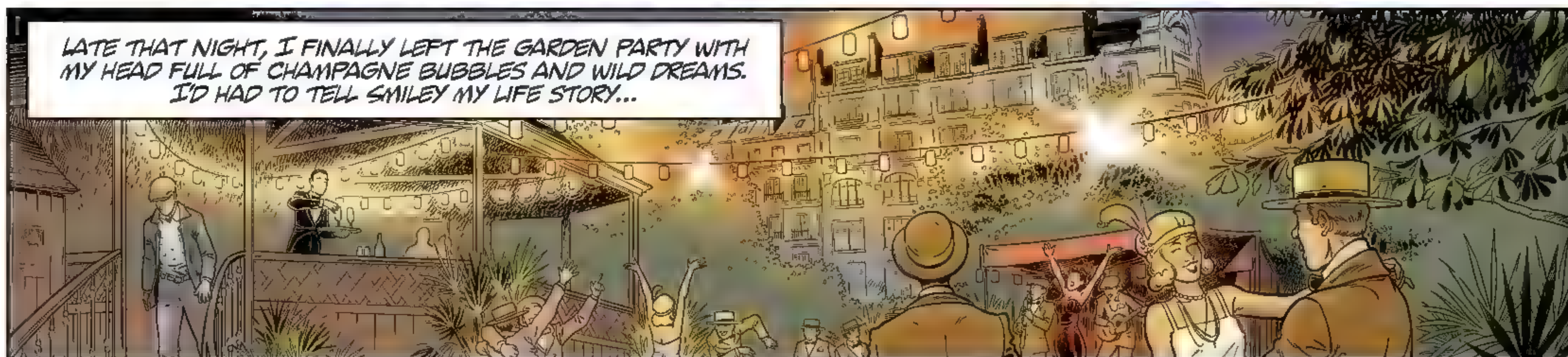
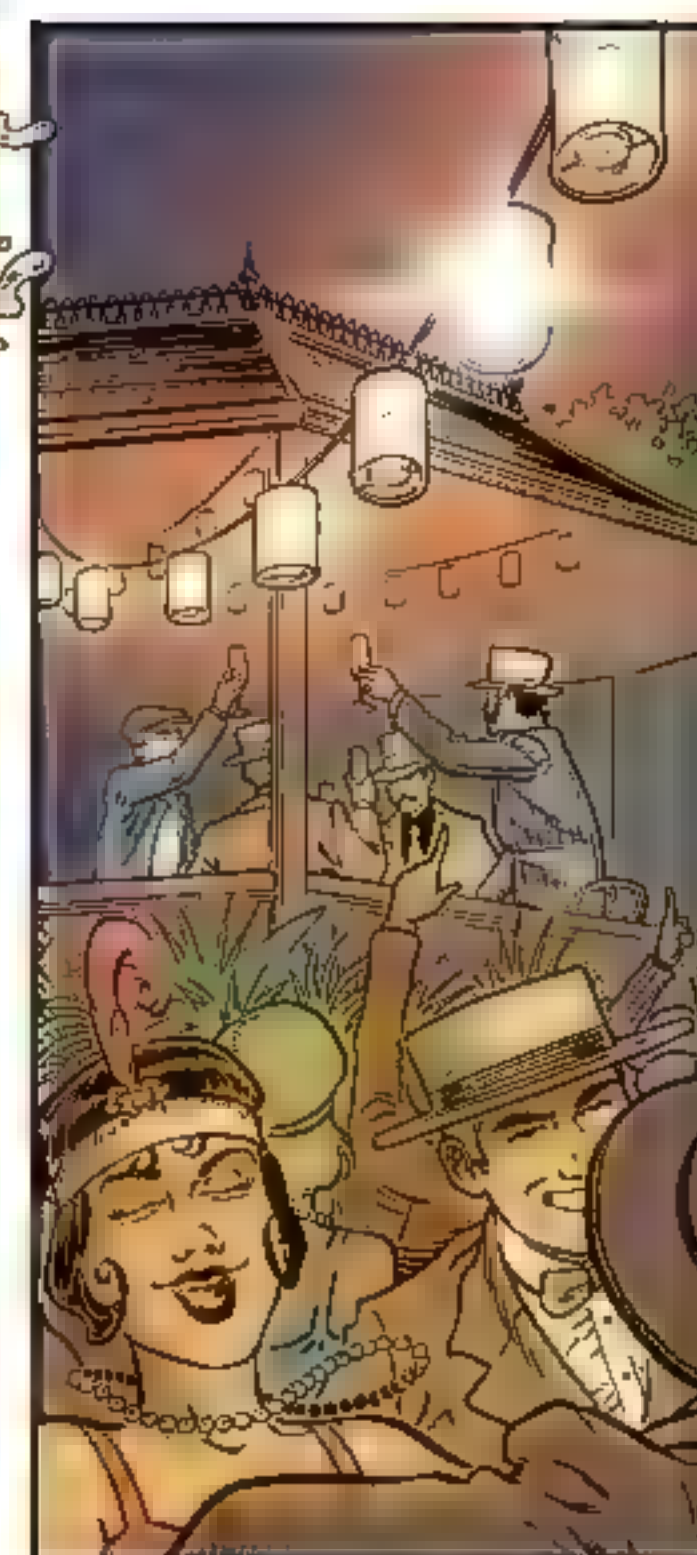
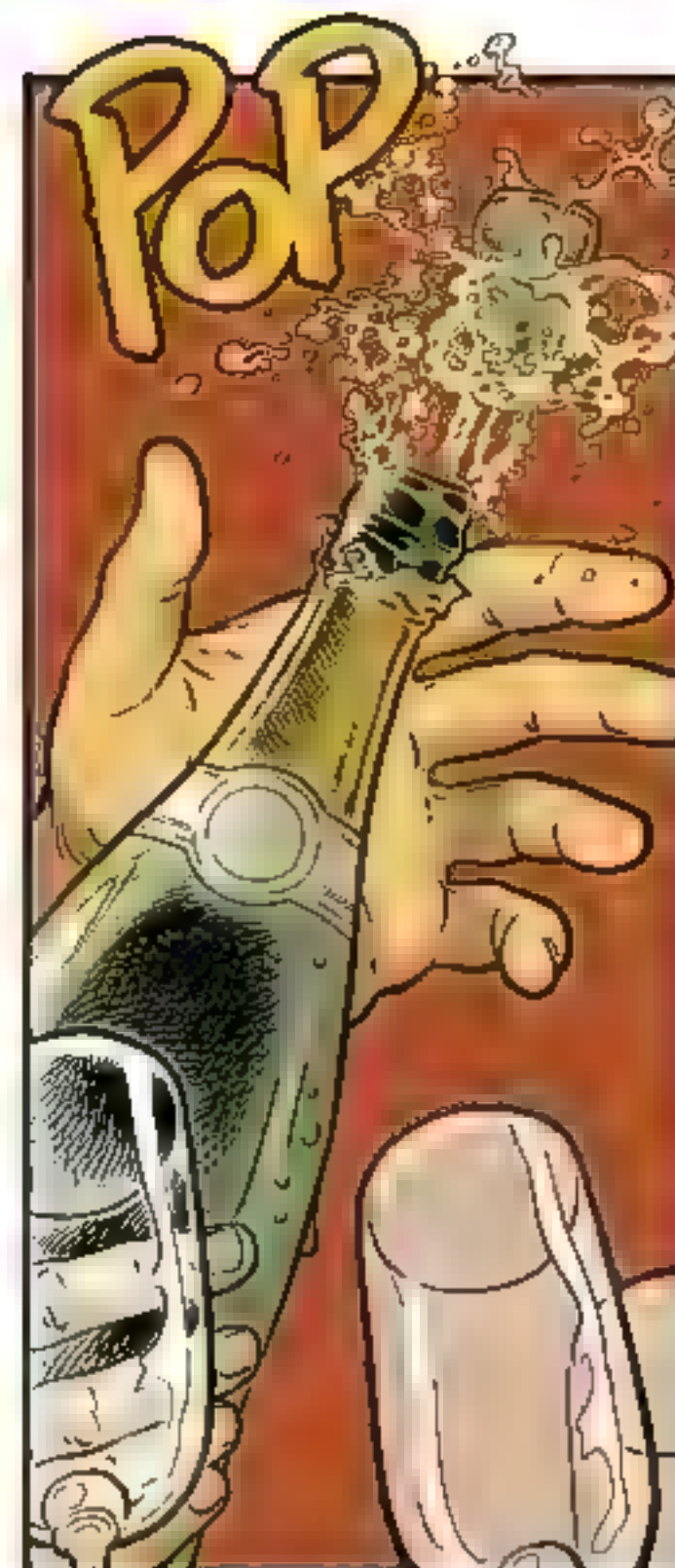


I'M NOT LYING
TO YOU, SIR.
I PROMISE!

I DON'T WANT TO
WASTE MY LIFE IN
A FACTORY. I WANT
TO BE A PILOT!



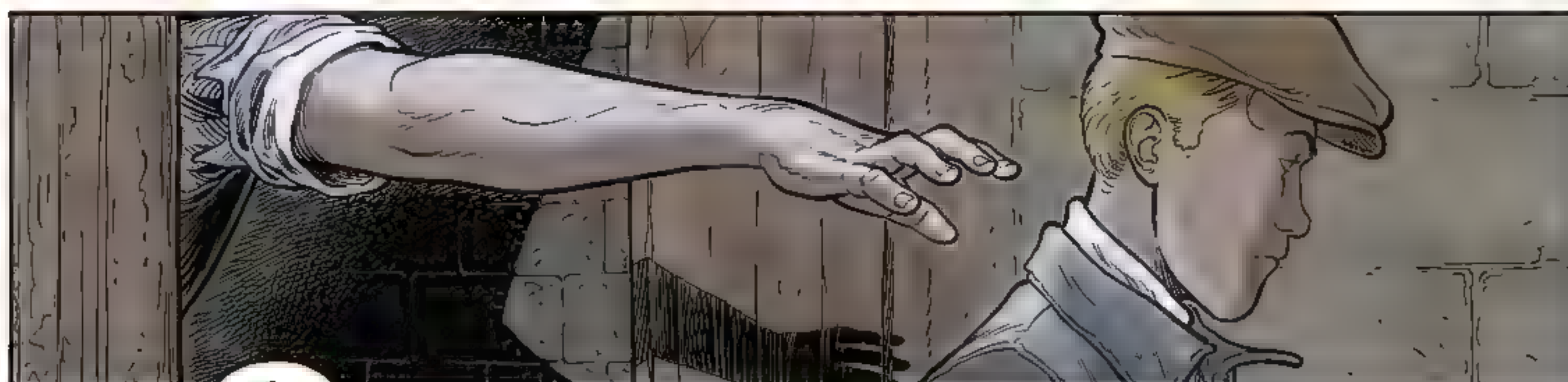
I BELIEVE YOU,
FLYBOY--EVEN WITH
YOUR GERMAN ACCENT.



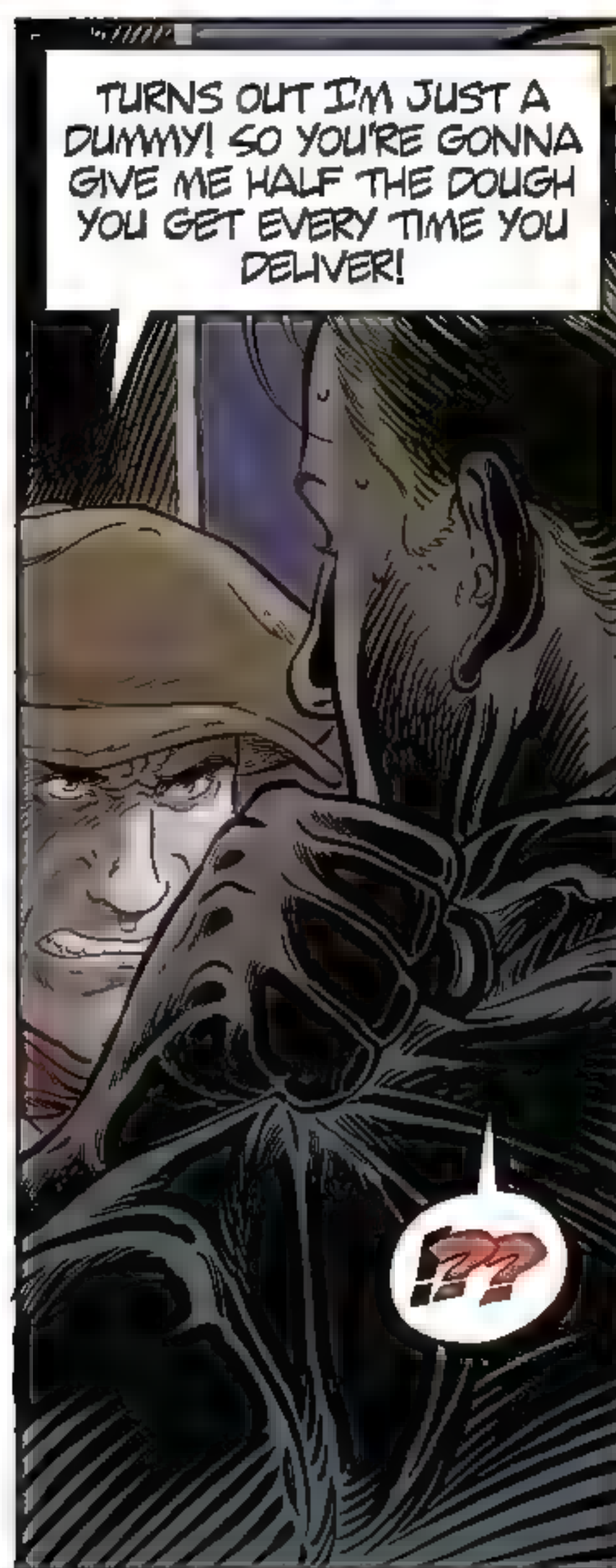
LATE THAT NIGHT, I FINALLY LEFT THE GARDEN PARTY WITH
MY HEAD FULL OF CHAMPAGNE BUBBLES AND WILD DREAMS.
I'D HAD TO TELL SMILEY MY LIFE STORY...



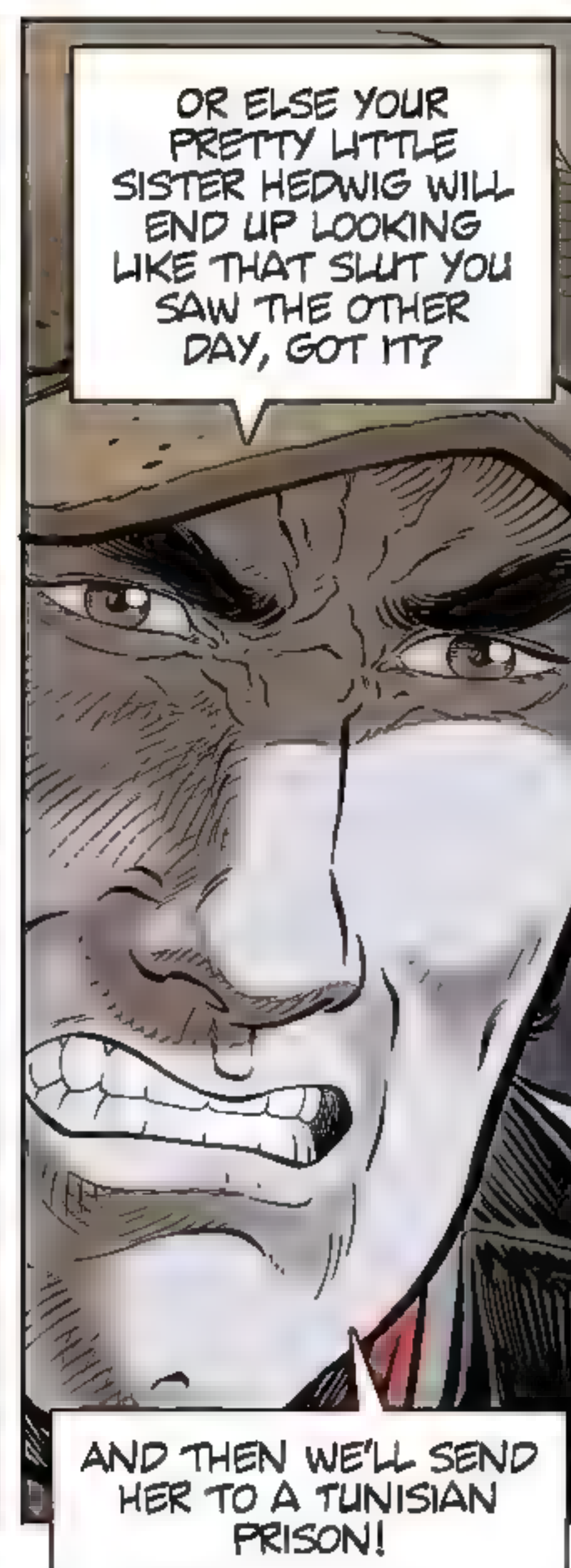
...AND HE WAS PRETTY
IMPRESSED. JUST AS WELL,
GIVEN WHO HE WAS! HE COULD
PICTURE AFRICA, FLYING OVER
THE PLAINS... AND HE SEEMED
TO LIKE ME EVEN MORE.



LISTEN TO ME, HUN!
YOU PERSUADED ME TO
INTRODUCE YOU TO MY
SUPPLIER, BUT THINGS
AIN'T GOING THE WAY
I PLANNED.

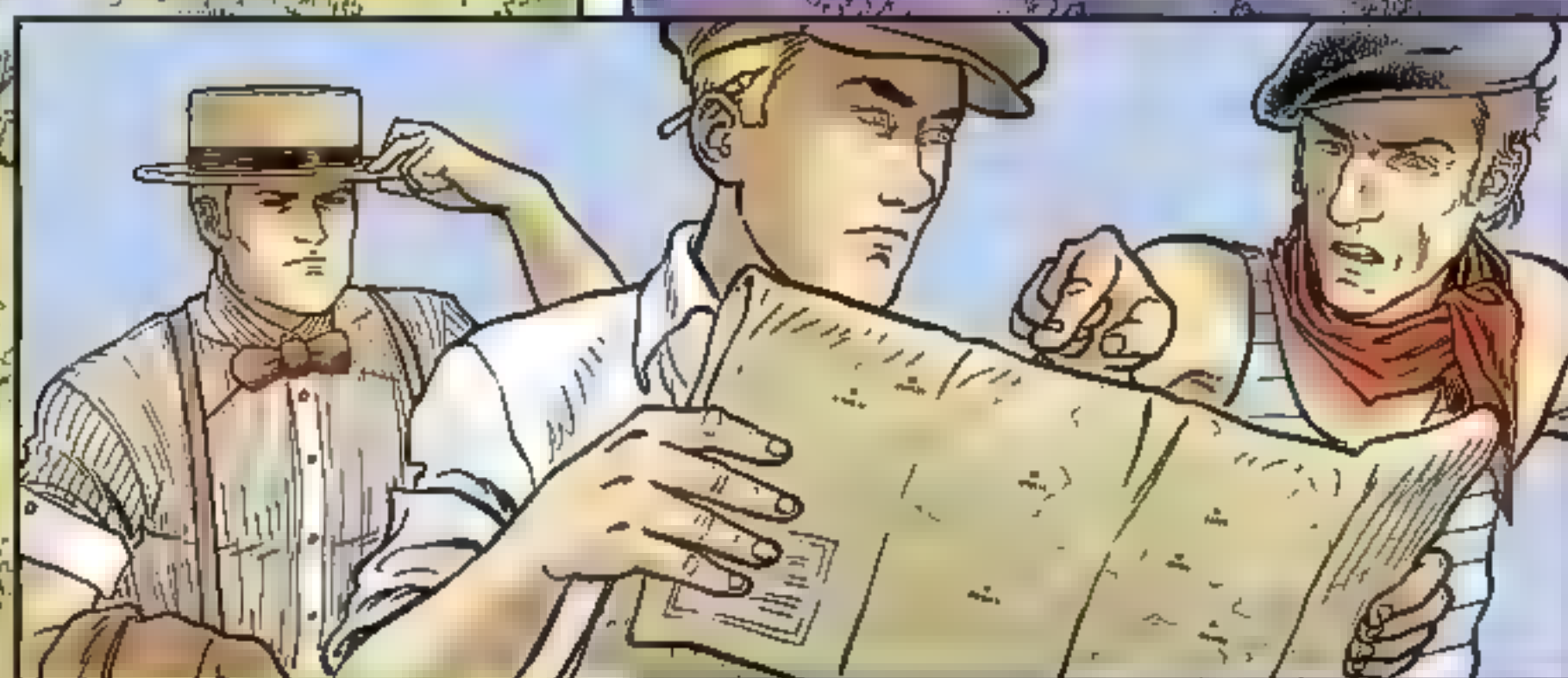
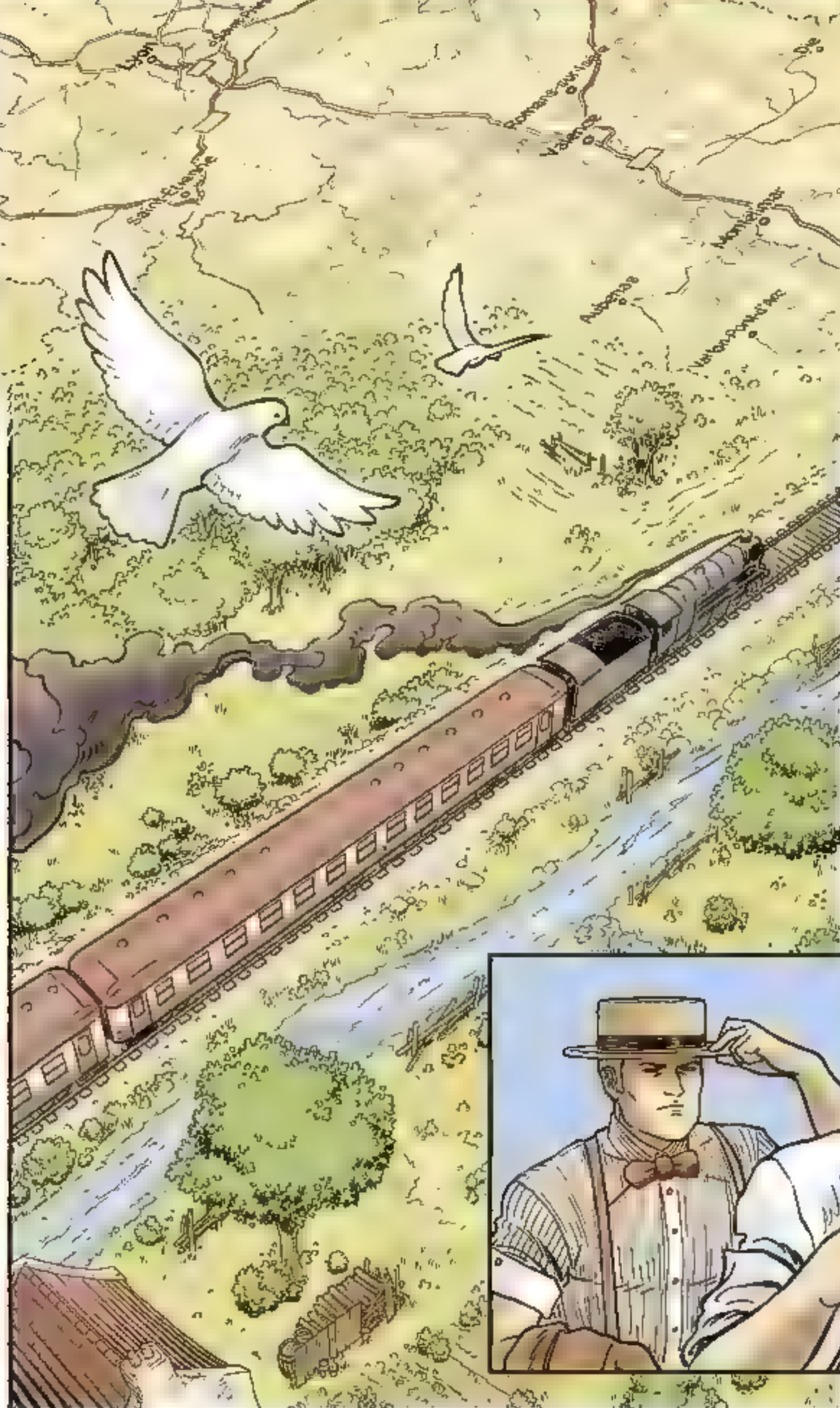
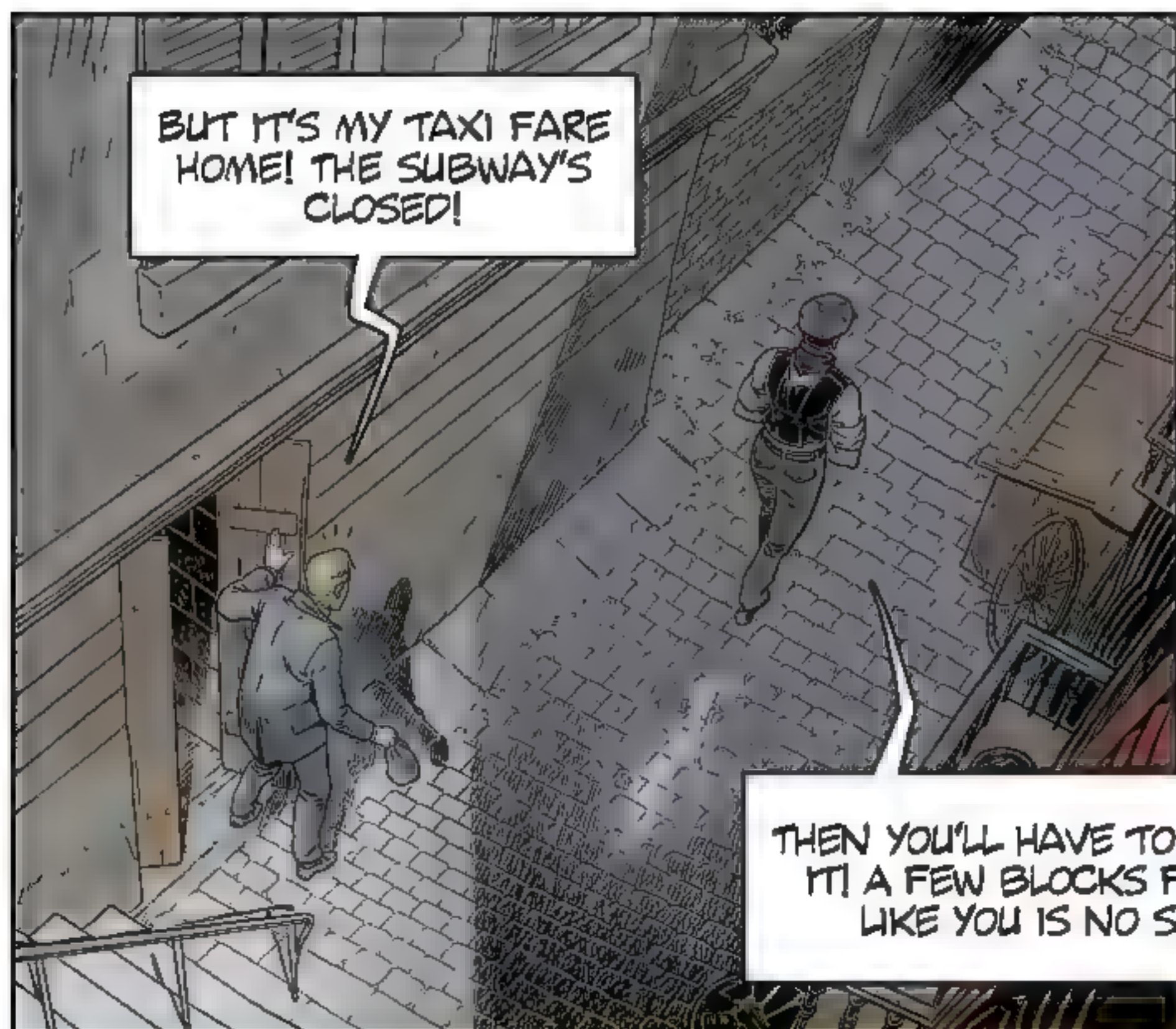


TURNS OUT I'M JUST A
DUMMY! SO YOU'RE GONNA
GIVE ME HALF THE DOUGH
YOU GET EVERY TIME YOU
DELIVER!

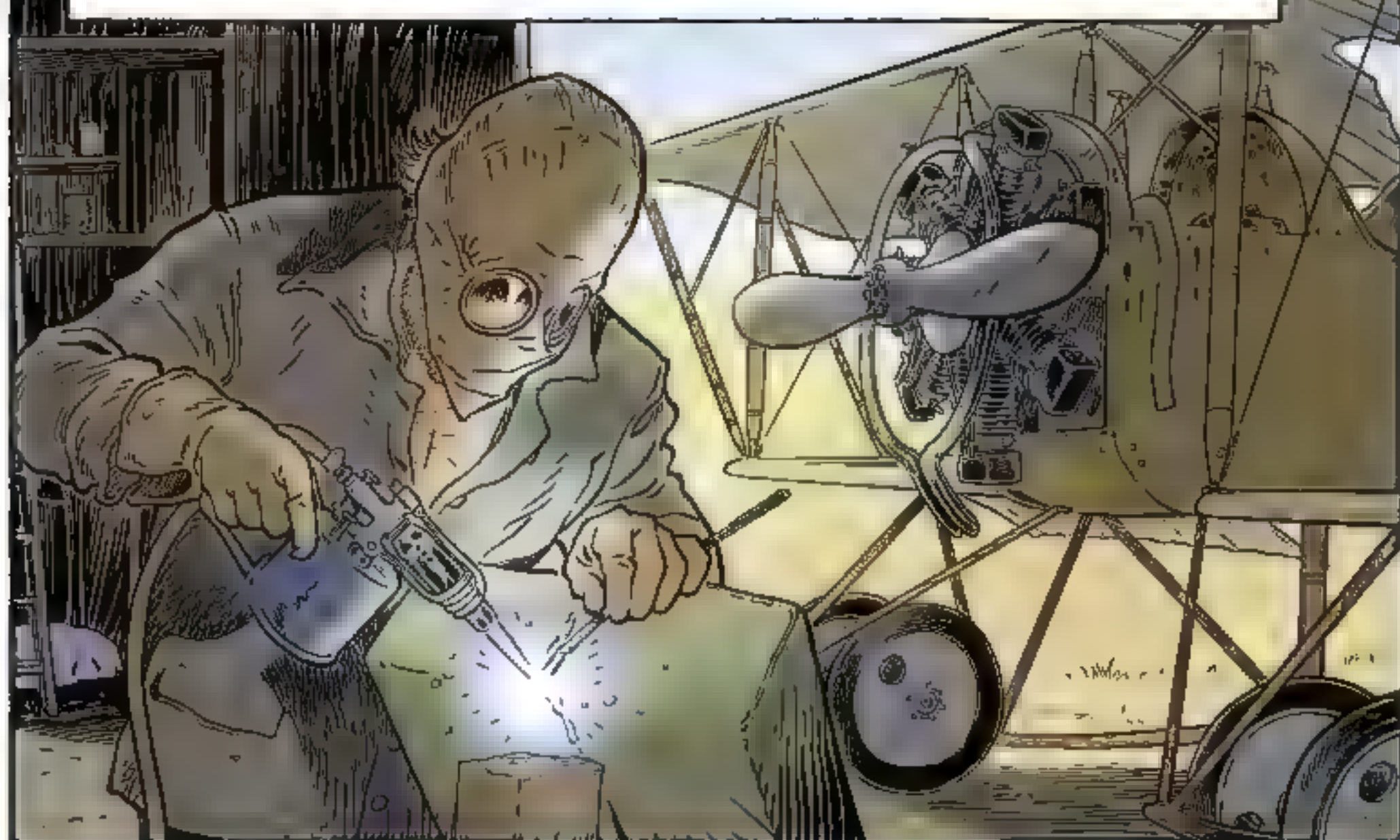


OR ELSE YOUR
PRETTY LITTLE
SISTER HEDWIG WILL
END UP LOOKING
LIKE THAT SLUT YOU
SAW THE OTHER
DAY, GOT IT?

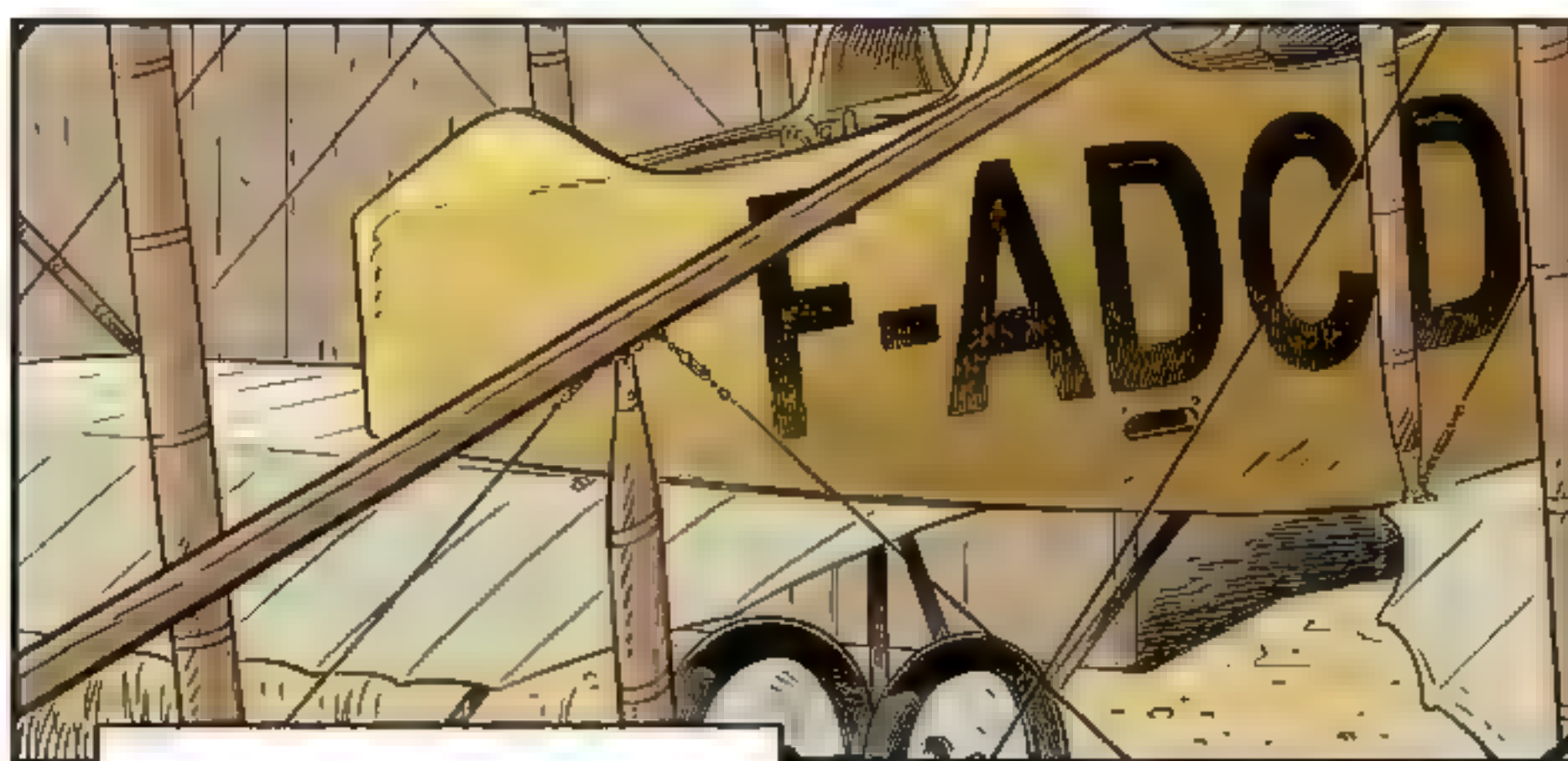
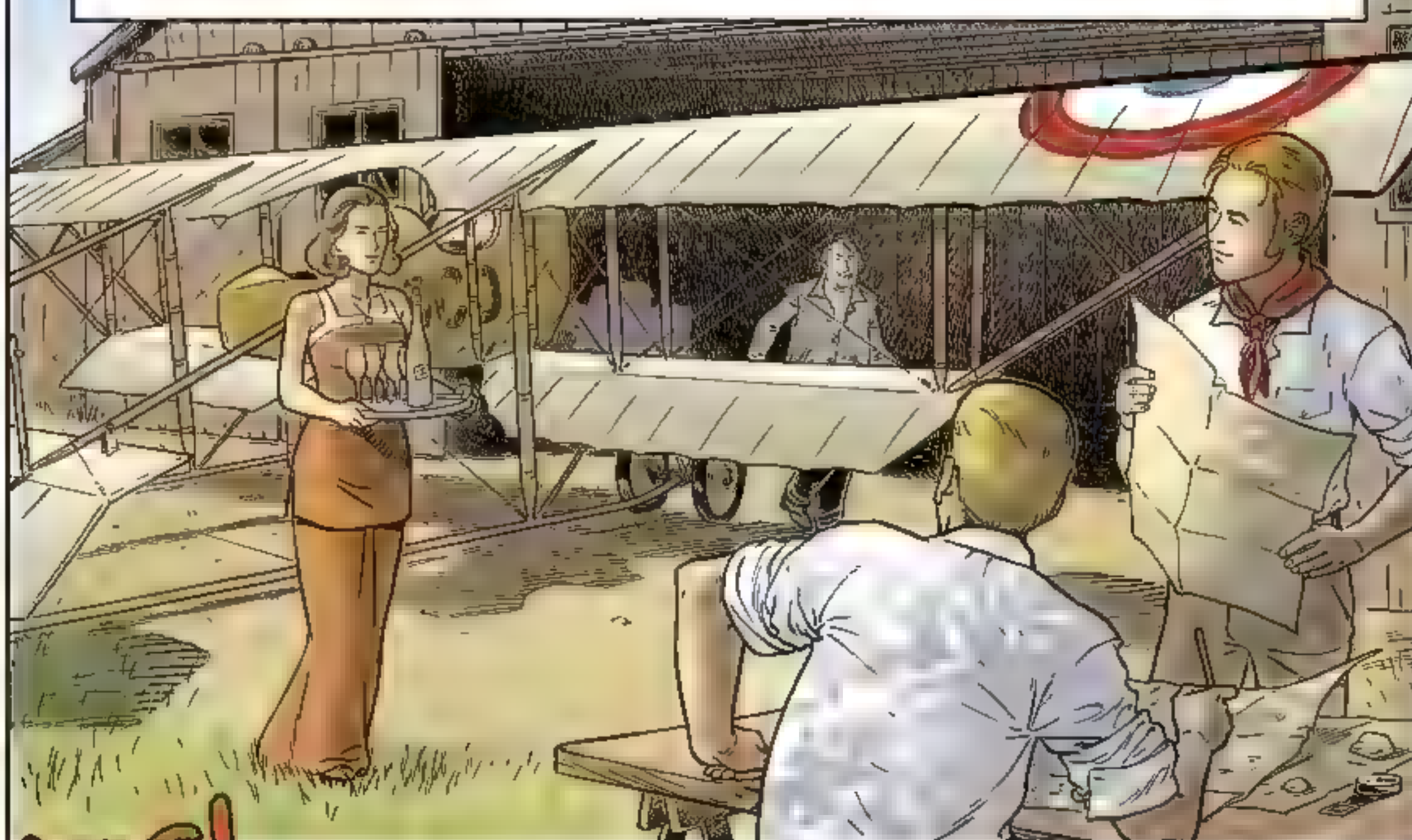
AND THEN WE'LL SEND
HER TO A TUNISIAN
PRISON!



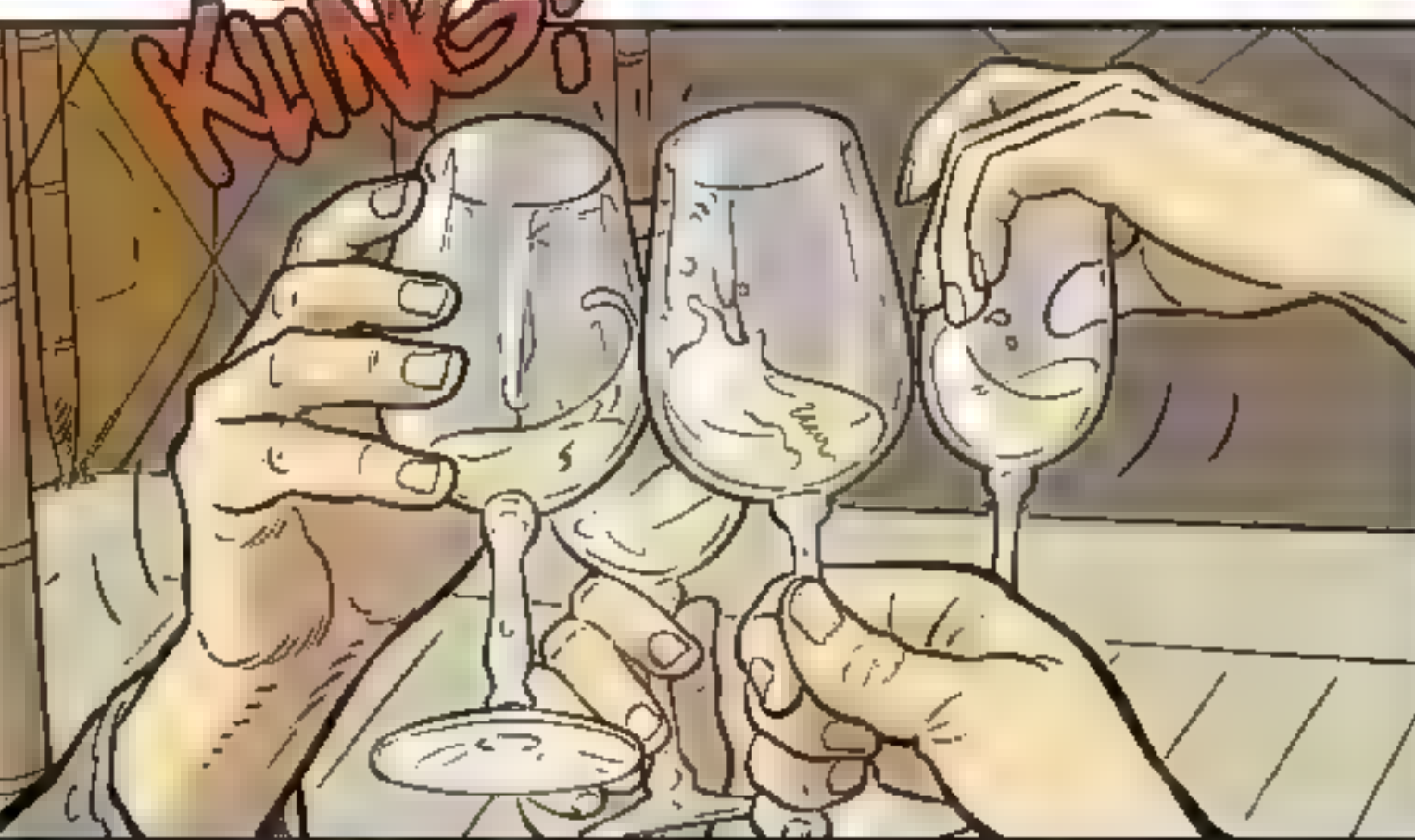
THE G.3 COULD ONLY FLY ABOUT 250 MILES WITHOUT REFUELING, SO THE CHALLENGE FOR OSCAR WAS TO ADD A RESERVE TANK SO THAT I COULD MAKE THE WHOLE JOURNEY IN ONE GO.



FORTUNATELY, THE NEW ANZANI TEN-CYLINDER ENGINE WAS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO TAKE OFF WITH THE EXTRA WEIGHT.

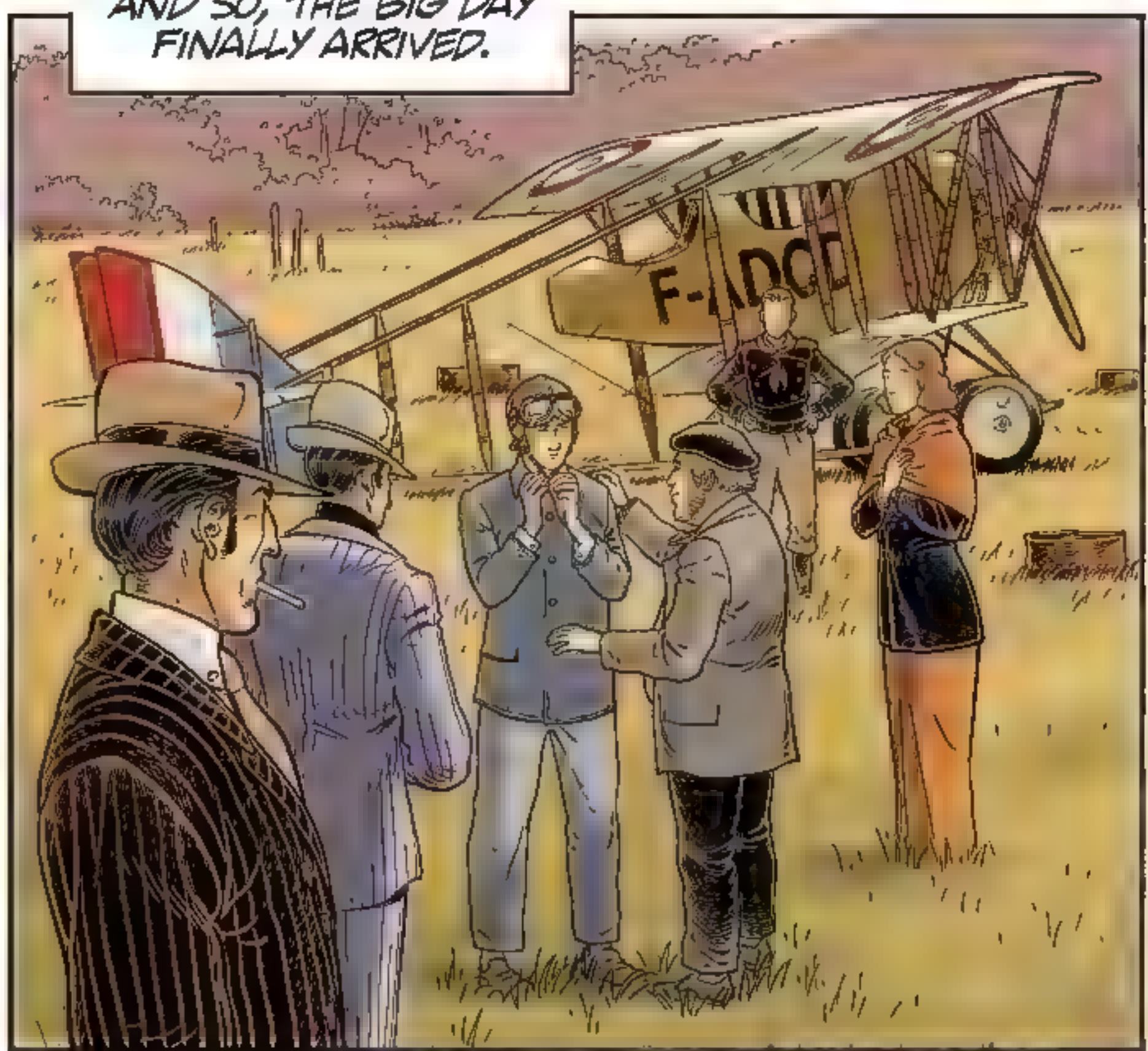


KLING!

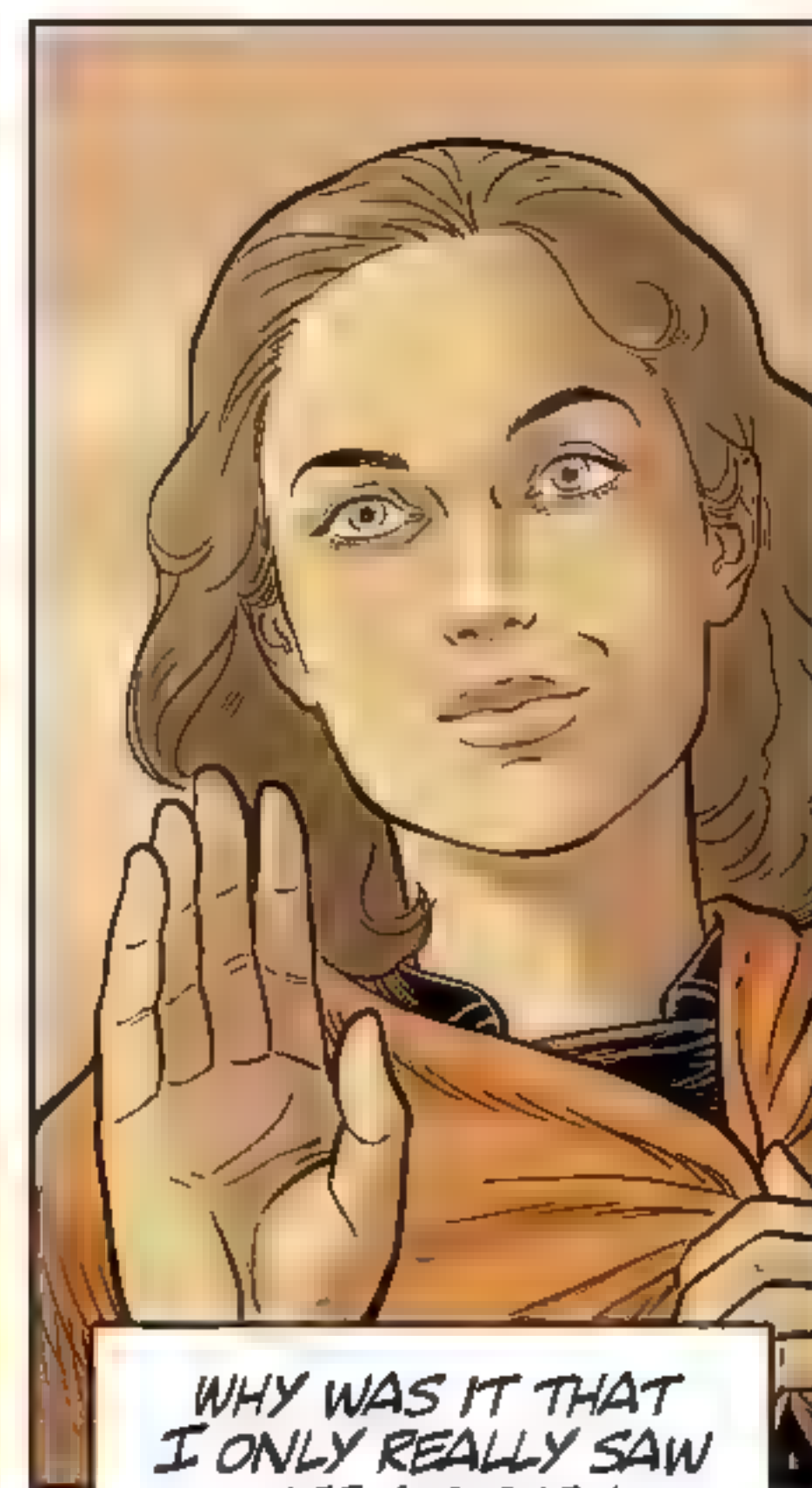


SINCE FRANCE HAD JUST SIGNED AN INTERNATIONAL AIRLINE LICENSING AGREEMENT (1), OSCAR HAD PAINTED A FALSE REGISTRATION ON THE SIDE OF THE FUSELAGE... IN BLACK, "TO WARD OFF EVIL." IT WAS HIS LITTLE JOKE.

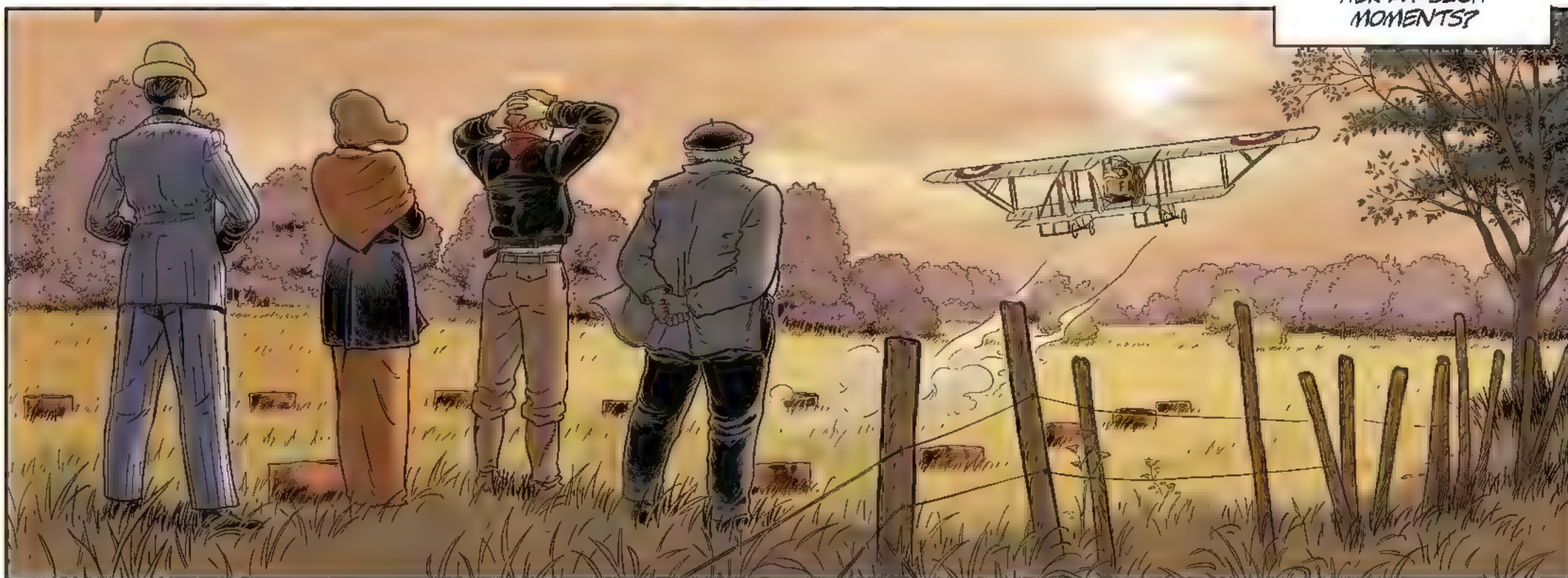
AND SO, THE BIG DAY FINALLY ARRIVED.



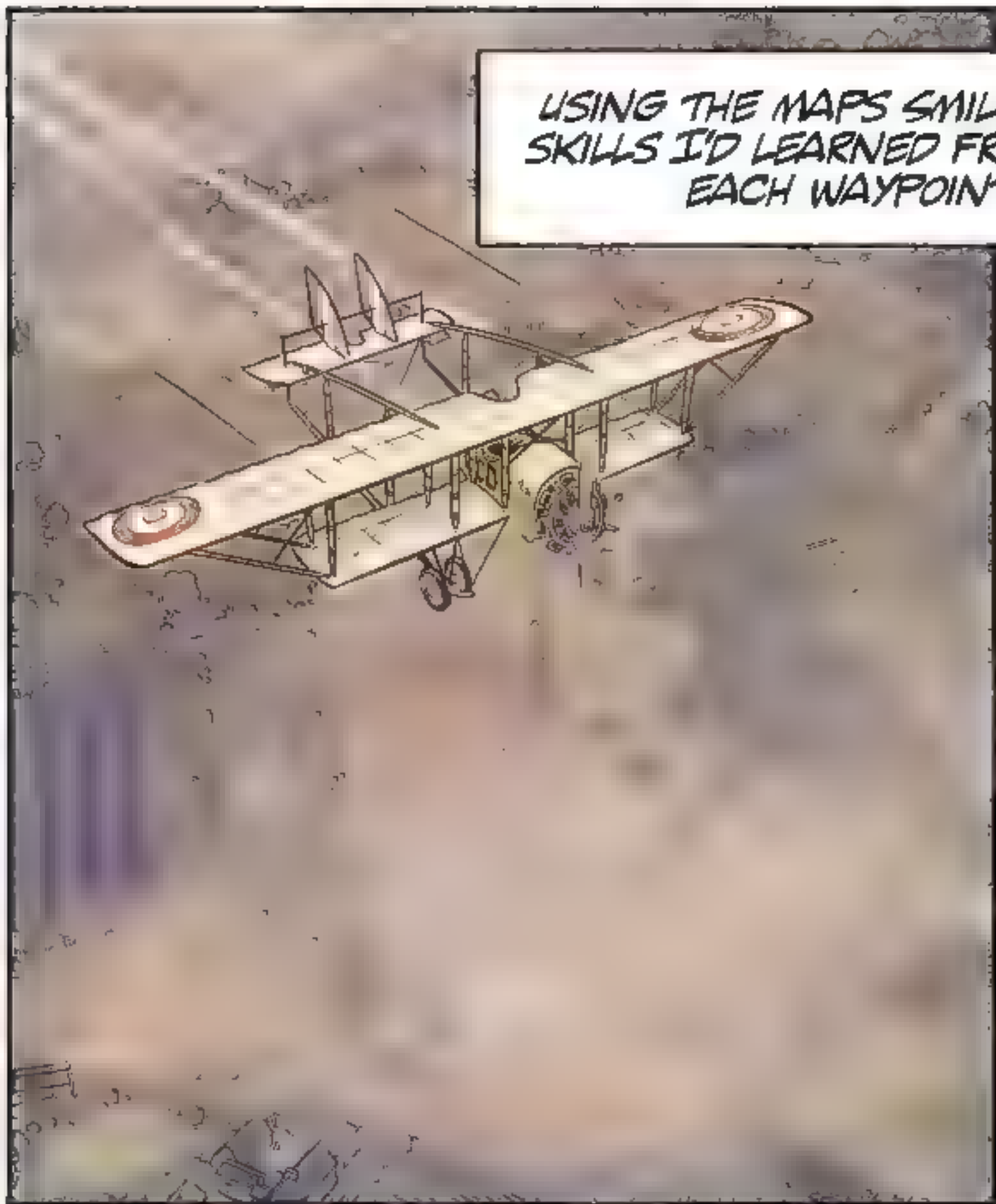
ONCE AGAIN, MY HEART STARTED THUMPING AS I STARTED THE ENGINE, AND THEY ACCELERATED IN UNISON! NEEDING REASSURANCE, I LOOKED TO ADELE.



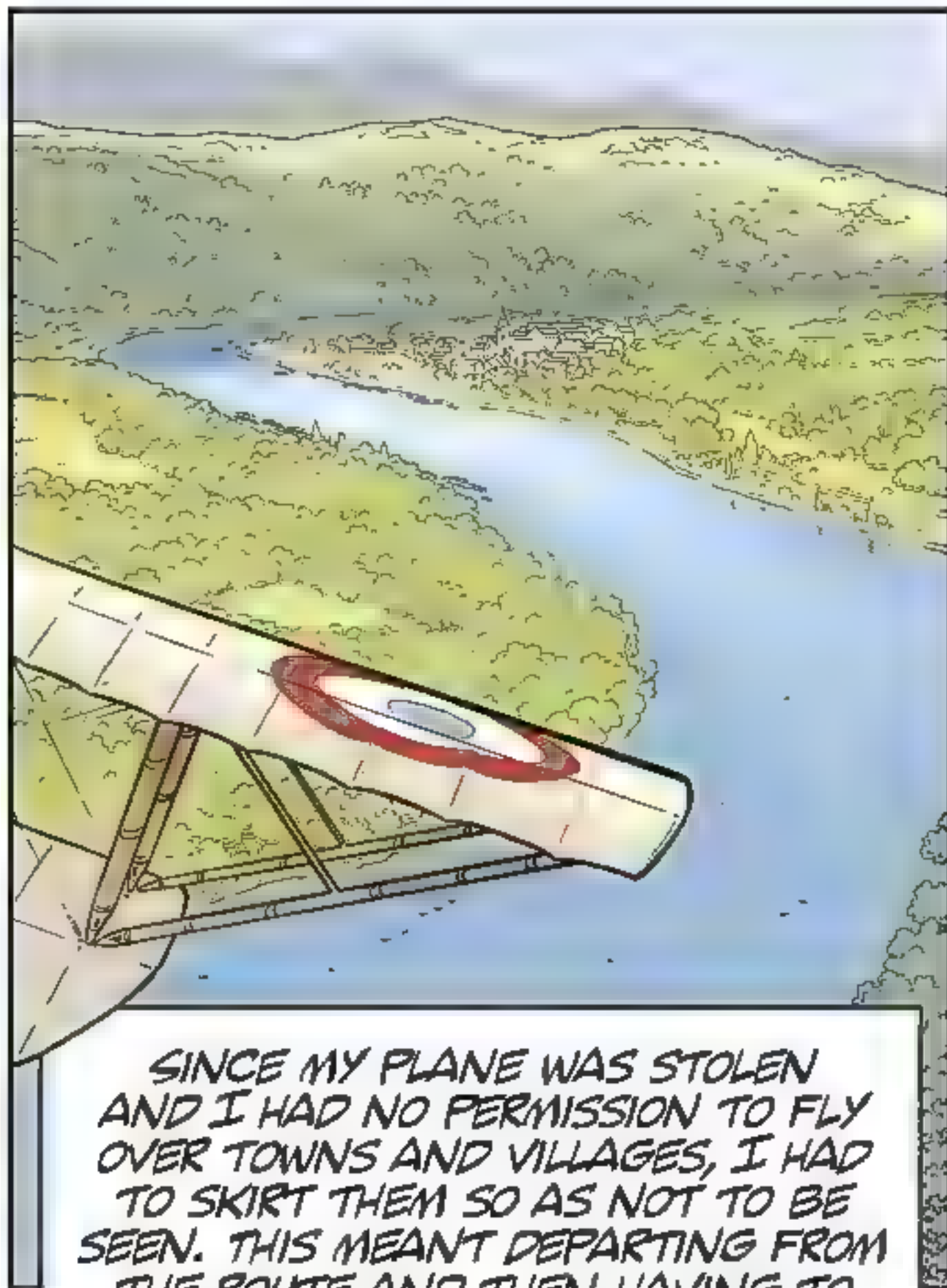
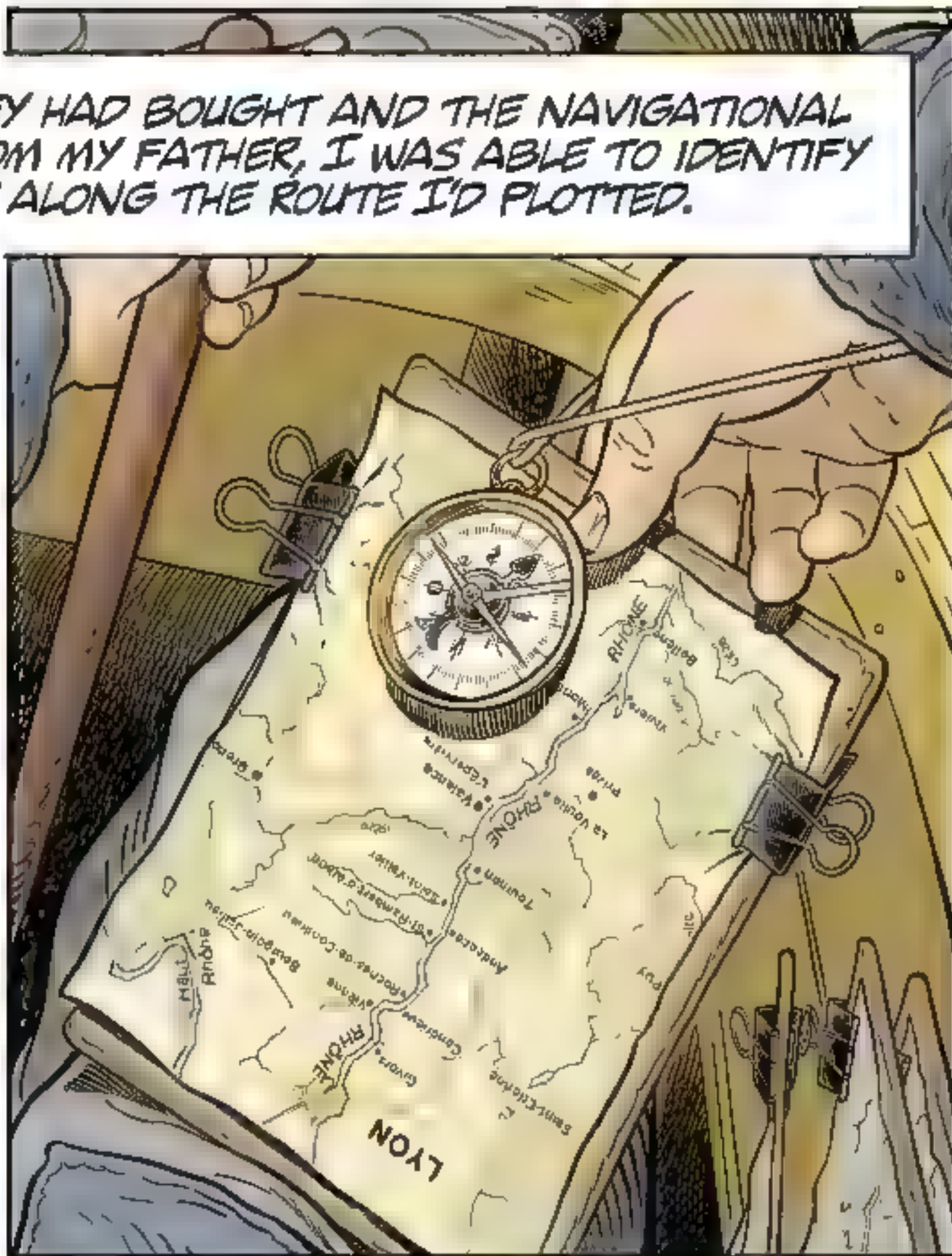
WHY WAS IT THAT I ONLY REALLY SAW HER AT SUCH MOMENTS?



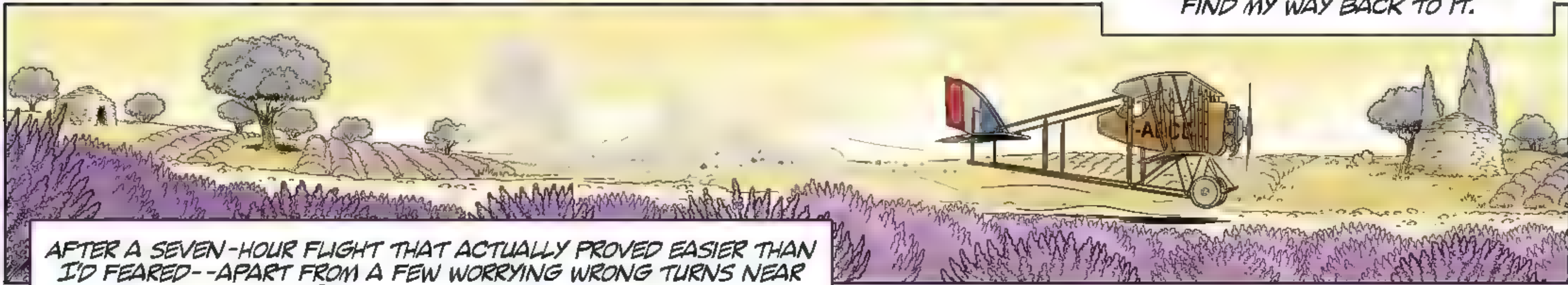
(1) IN 1919.



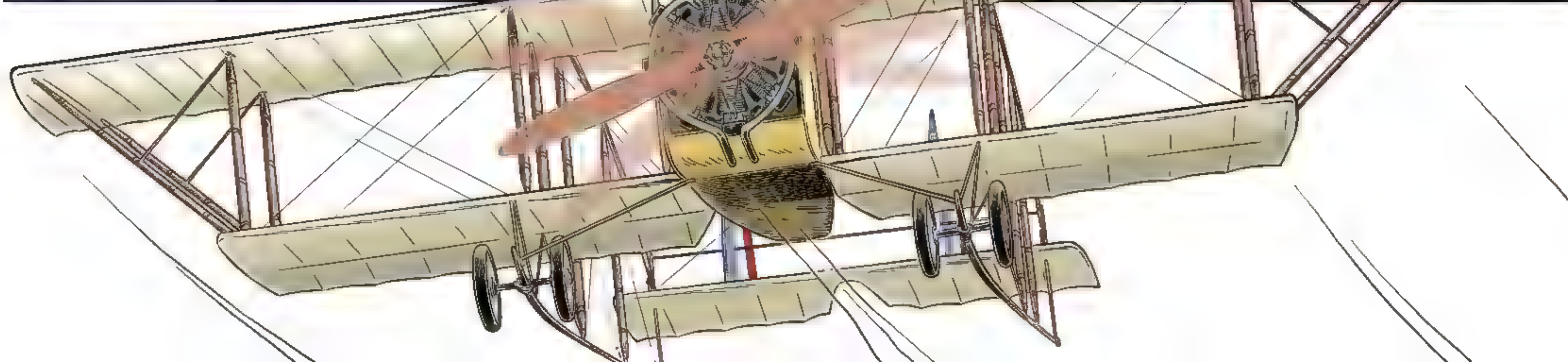
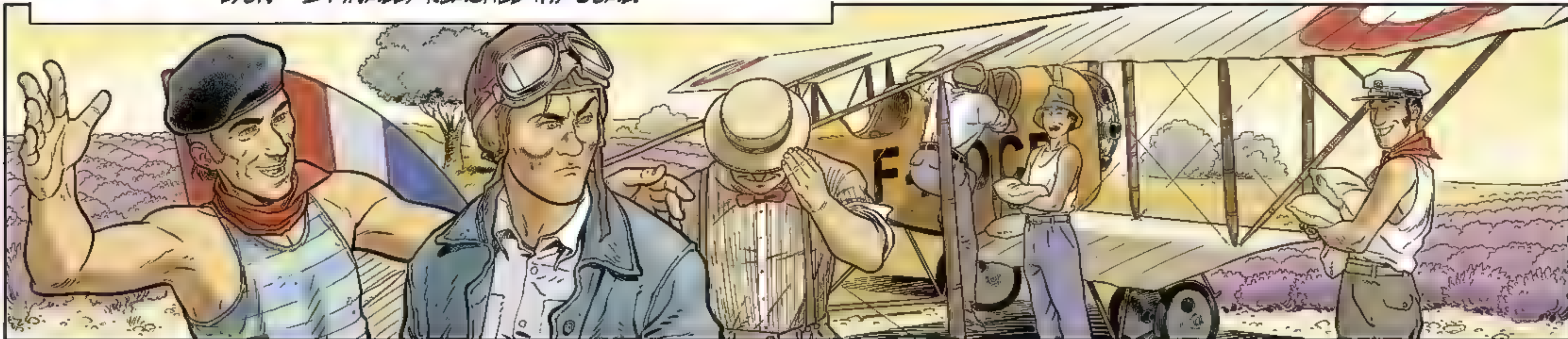
USING THE MAPS SMILEY HAD BOUGHT AND THE NAVIGATIONAL SKILLS I'D LEARNED FROM MY FATHER, I WAS ABLE TO IDENTIFY EACH WAYPOINT ALONG THE ROUTE I'D PLOTTED.

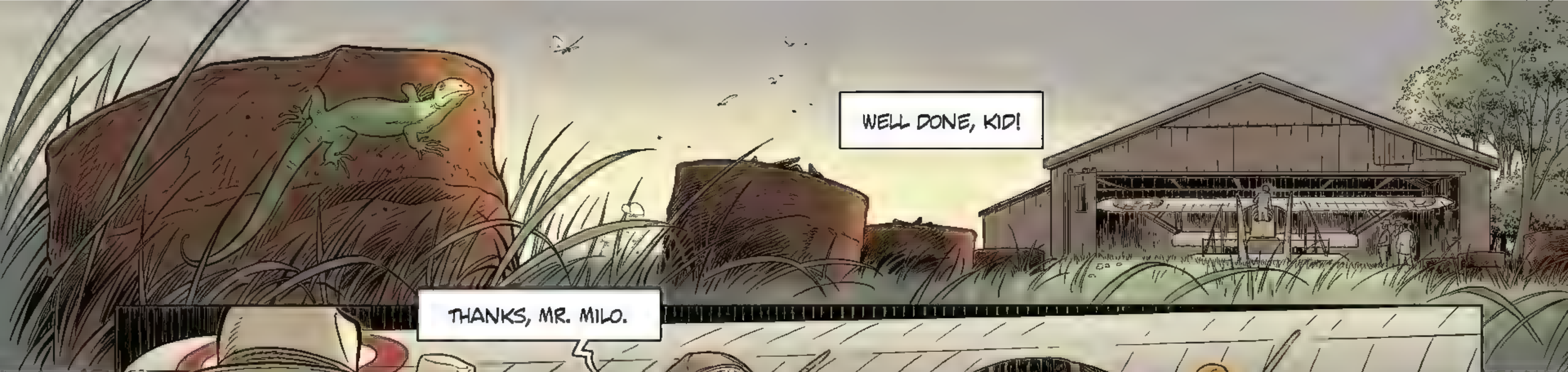


SINCE MY PLANE WAS STOLEN AND I HAD NO PERMISSION TO FLY OVER TOWNS AND VILLAGES, I HAD TO SKIRT THEM SO AS NOT TO BE SEEN. THIS MEANT DEPARTING FROM THE ROUTE AND THEN HAVING TO FIND MY WAY BACK TO IT.

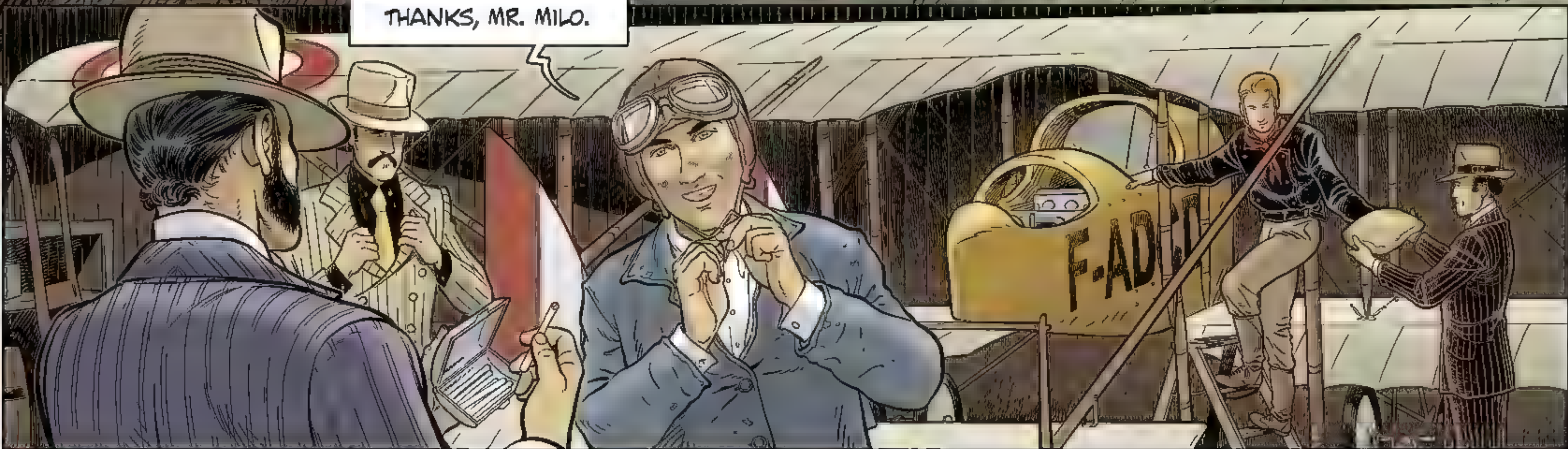


AFTER A SEVEN-HOUR FLIGHT THAT ACTUALLY PROVED EASIER THAN I'D FEARED--APART FROM A FEW WORRYING WRONG TURNS NEAR LYON--I FINALLY REACHED MY GOAL.





WELL DONE, KID!



THANKS, MR. MILO.



I'LL BE HONEST WITH YOU: I ONLY HALF BELIEVED YOUR STORY, AND MARCEL DIDN'T AT ALL! BUT I WANTED TO GIVE IT A TRY, JUST FOR FUN.

I ALSO WANTED TO SEE IF YOU HAD THE BALLS.



YOU'VE CONVINCED ME, FLYBOY! YOU FLY BACK IN THE MORNING.

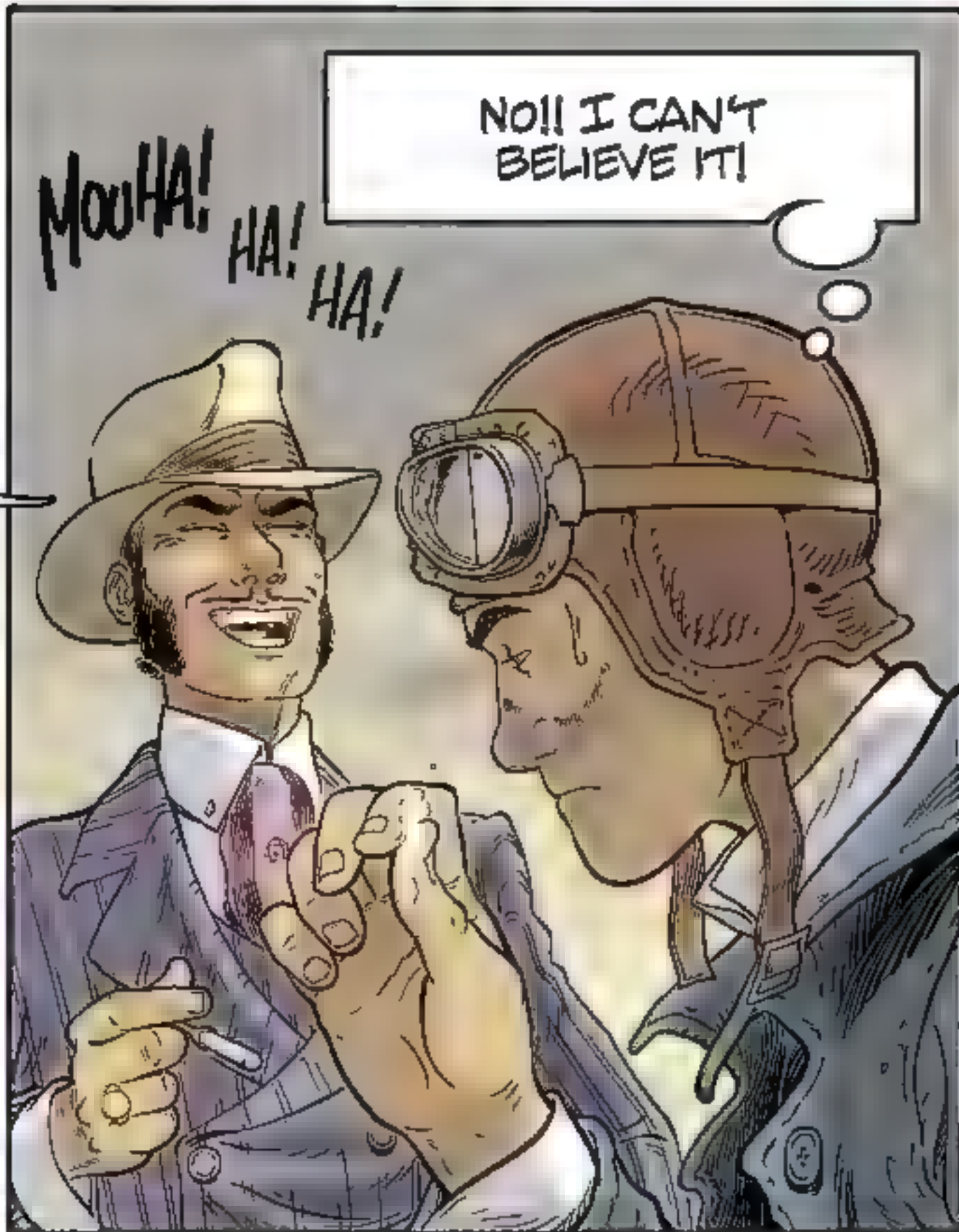
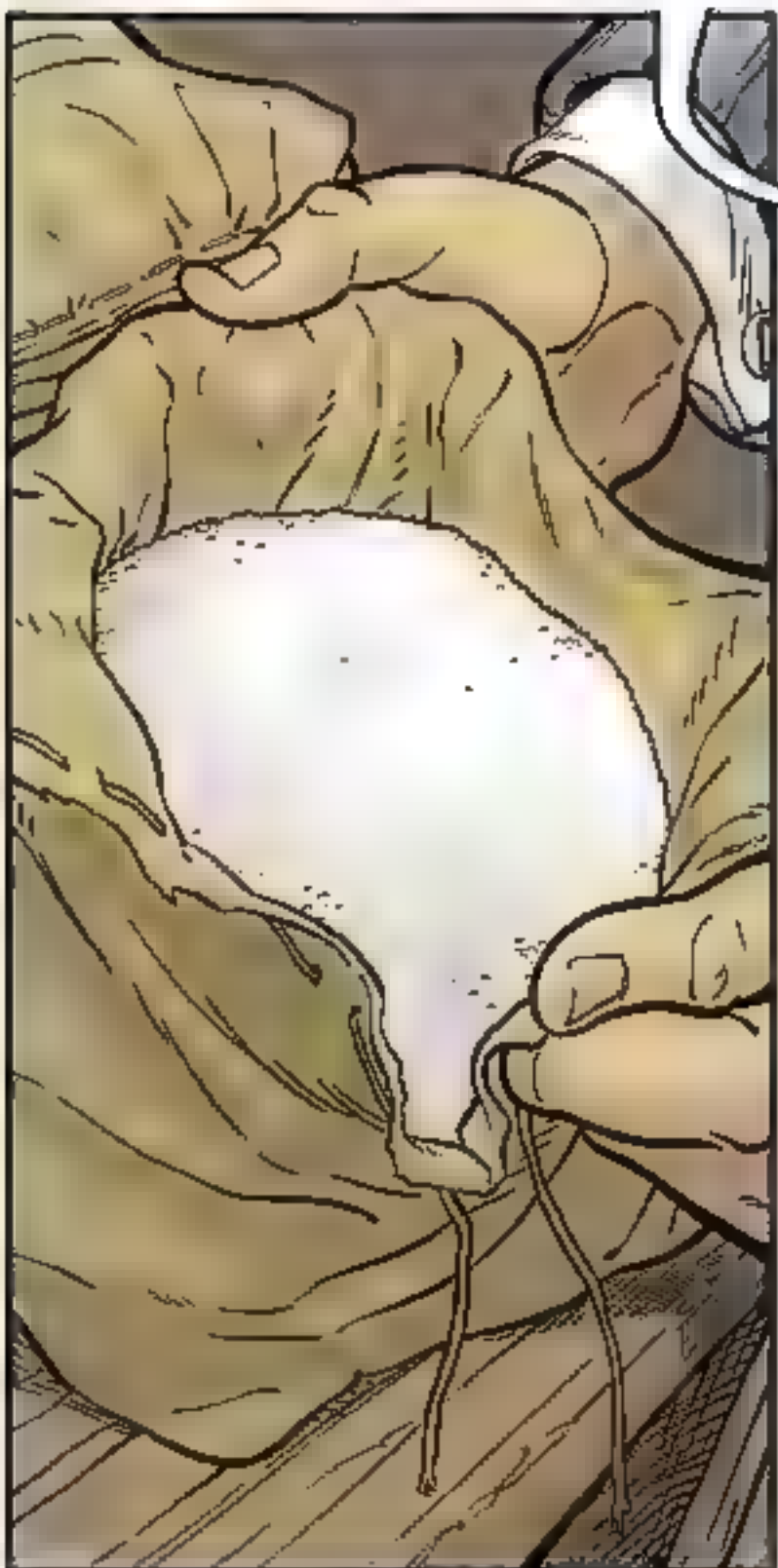
IN THE MORNING?



WELL, YEAH! TO GET THE STUFF THIS TIME, OF COURSE!

TO GET THE...? BUT THIS...

IT'S FLOUR! YOU DIDN'T REALLY THINK I'D ENTRUST YOU WITH MILLIONS OF FRANCS' WORTH OF PRODUCT WITHOUT BEING SURE YOU COULD PULL IT OFF?



NO!! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

IF THERE'S ONE THING I CAN'T STAND, IT'S PEOPLE NOT TRUSTING ME. I WAS ABSOLUTELY FUMING--ON THE INSIDE, OF COURSE--AS SMILEY BURST OUT LAUGHING.



SO DID HIS MEN...

...AND SO DID I, LIKE AN IDIOT!

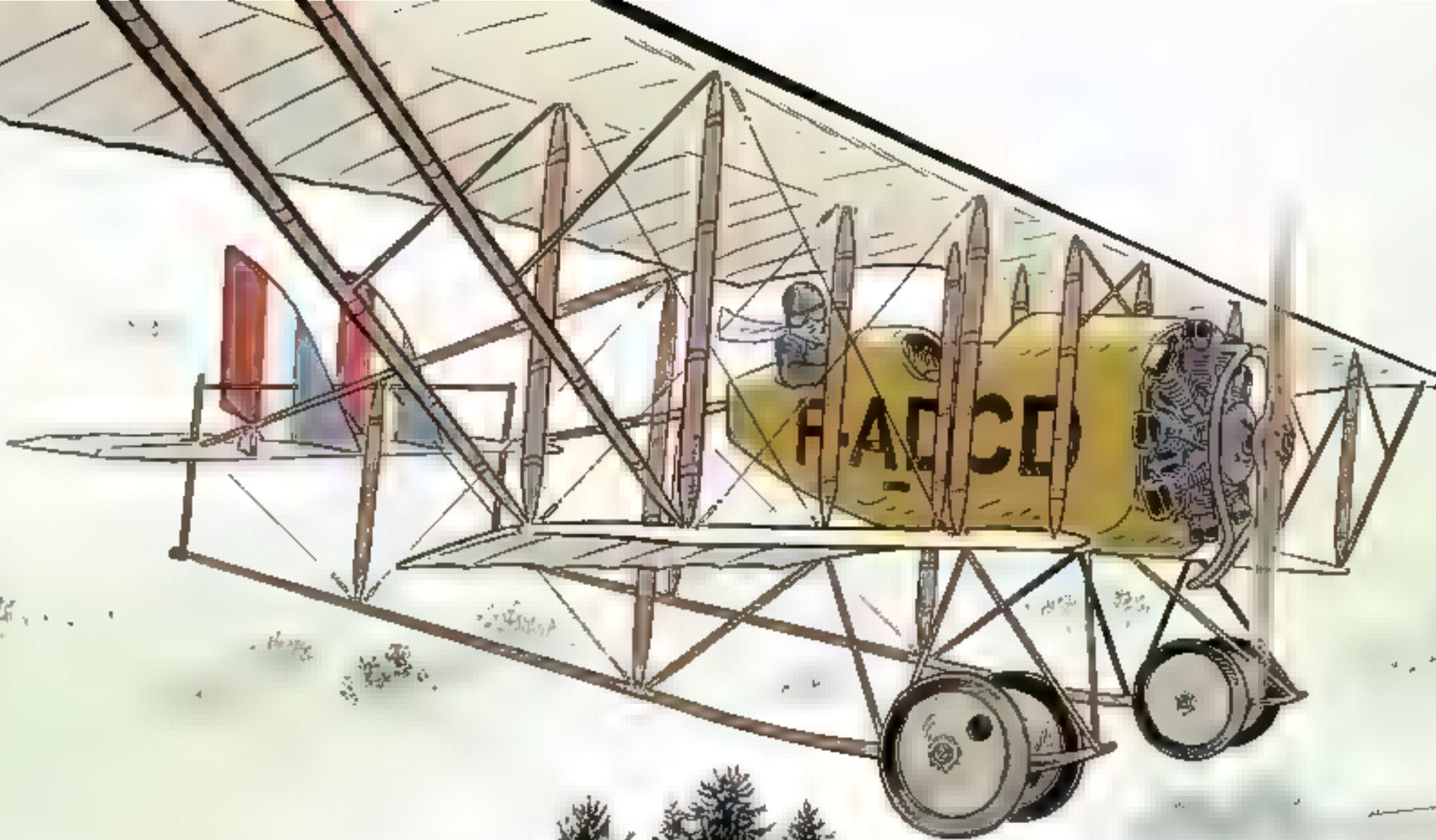


HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!

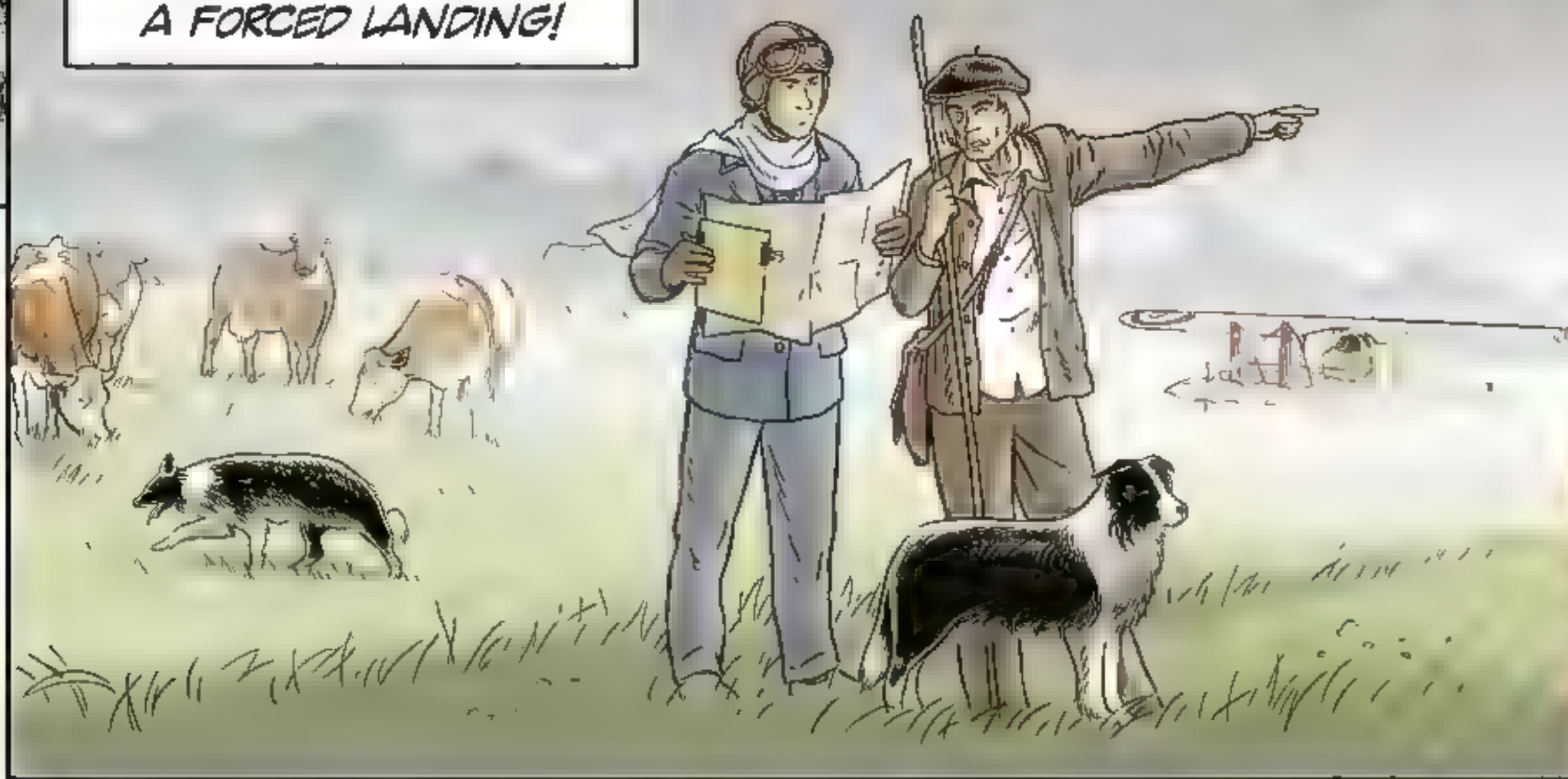
HA! HA!

WHAT ELSE COULD I DO?

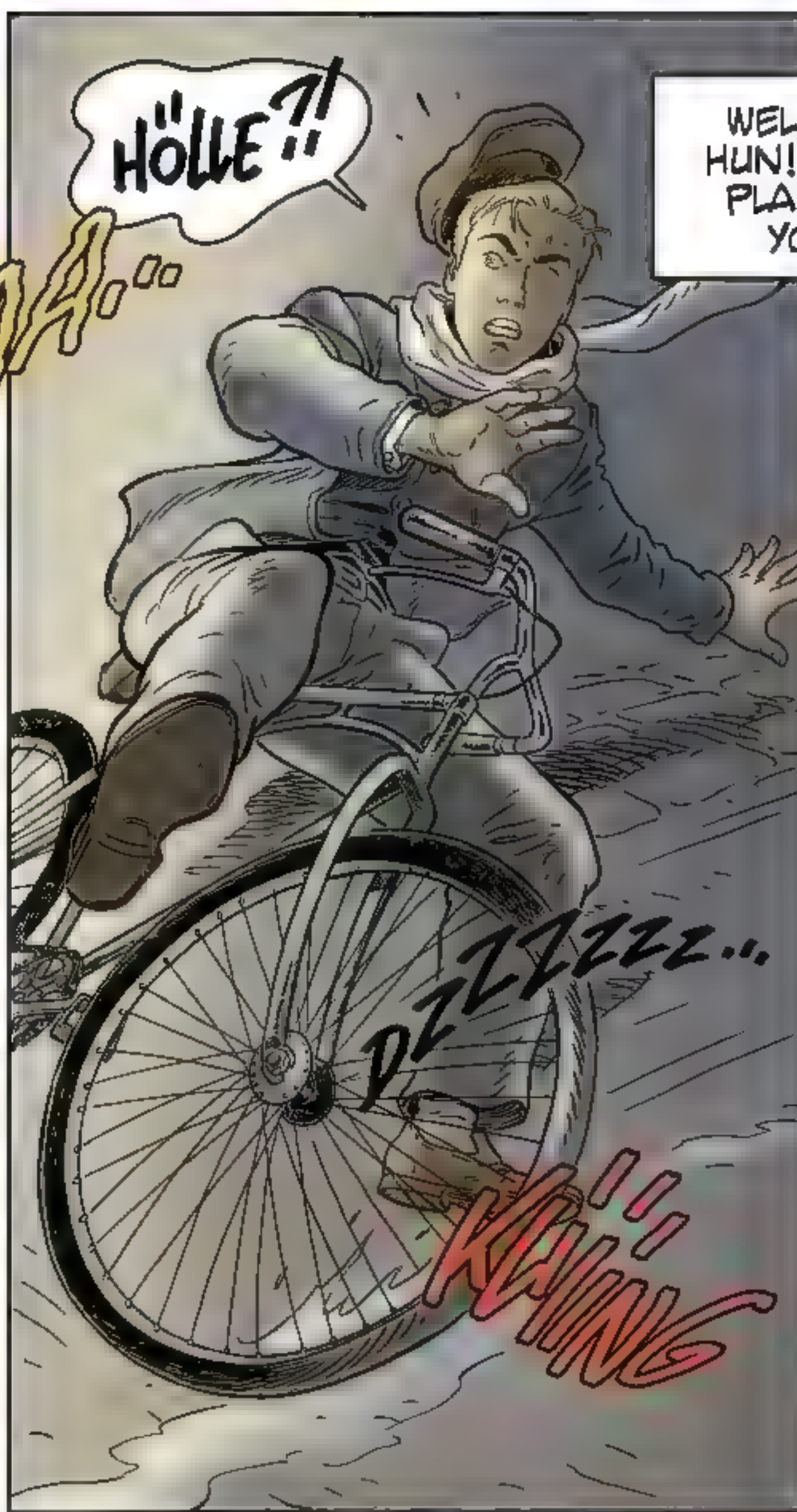
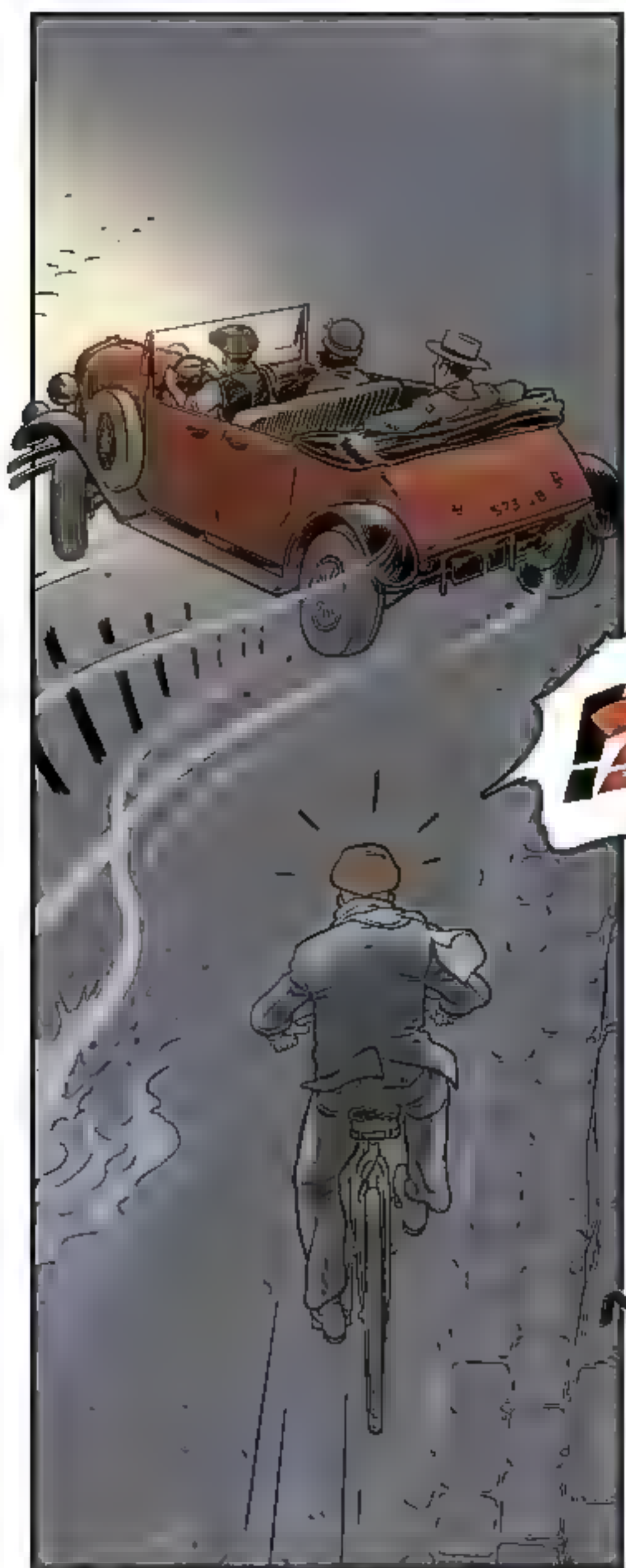
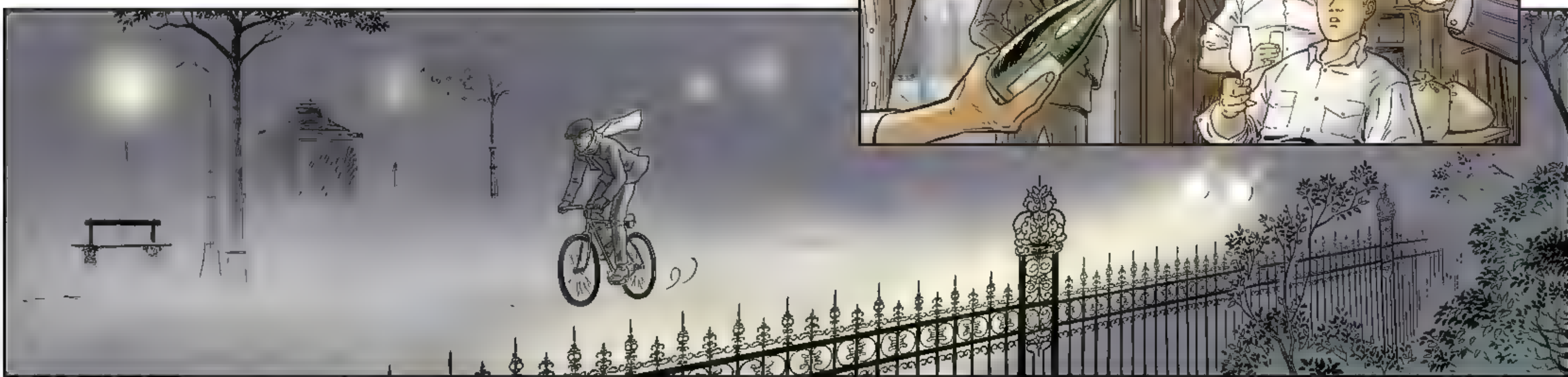
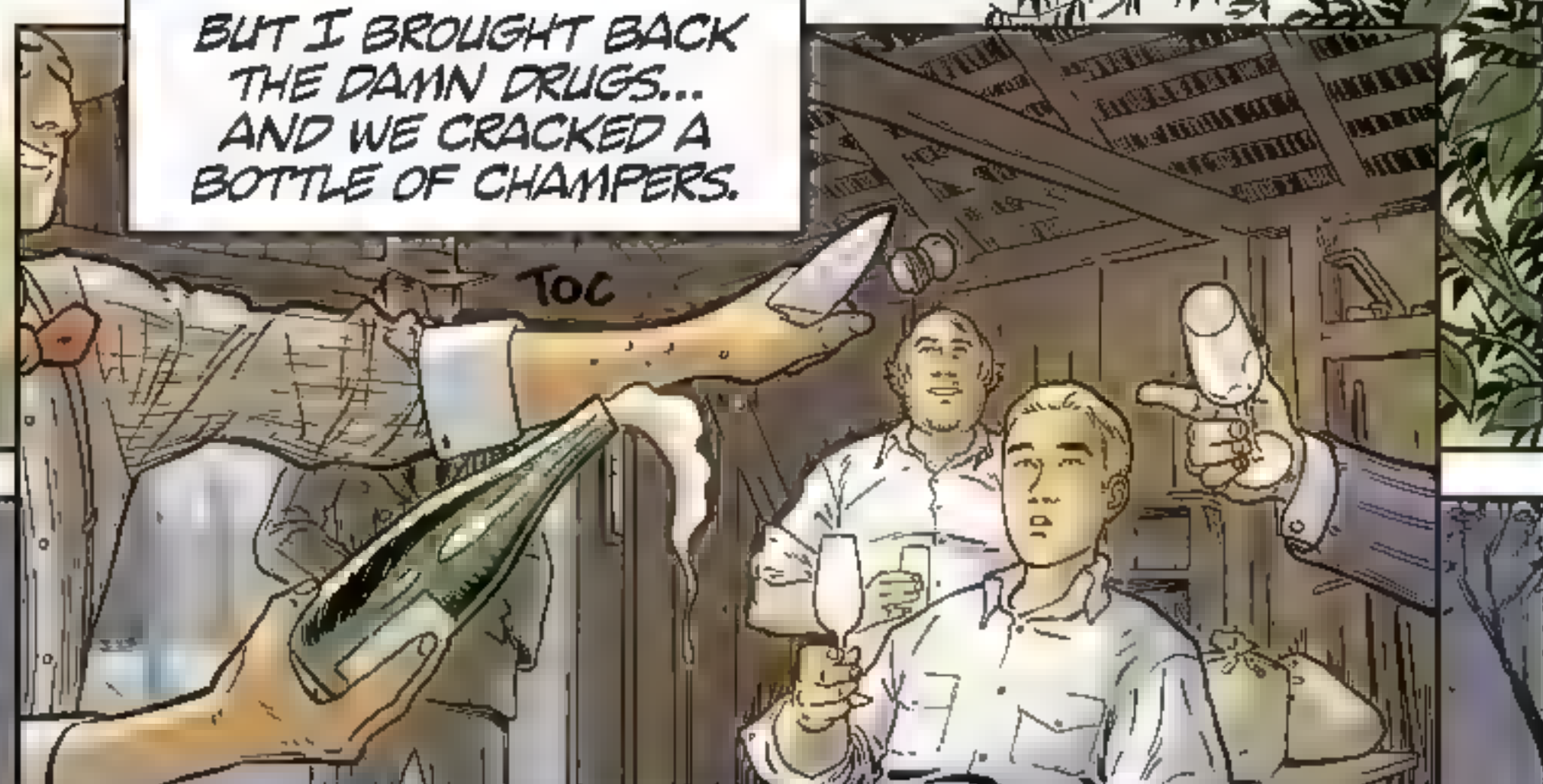
THE SECOND FLIGHT WAS MORE PROBLEMATIC. THICK FOG NEAR AUXERRE MEANT I HAD TO RESORT TO DEAD RECKONING, BUT I DIDN'T HAVE AN ACCURATE CLOCK, SO I HAD TO GUESS THE TIME, WHICH GAVE ME ONLY AN APPROXIMATE POSITION... AND SERIOUS DOUBTS.

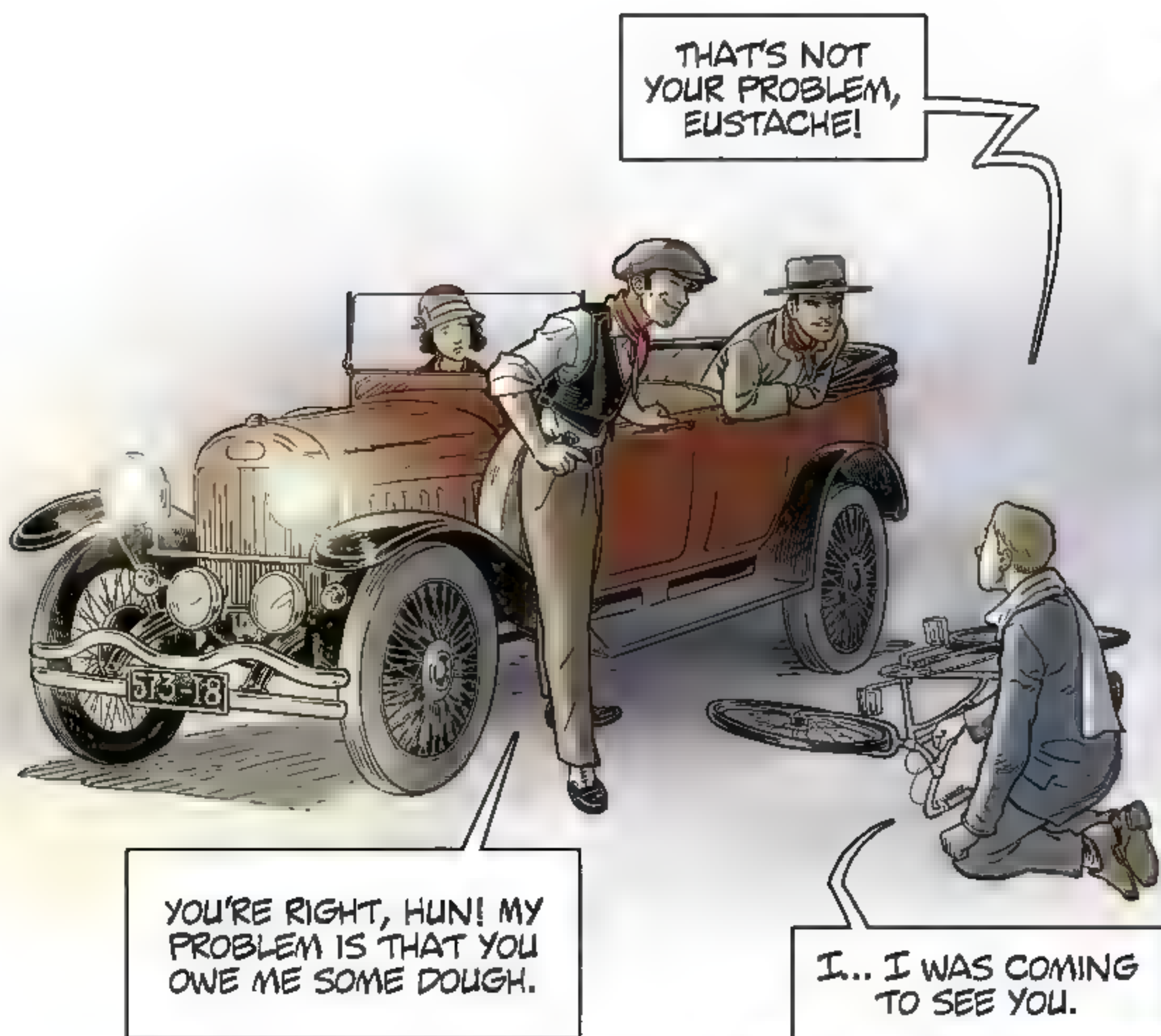


I EVEN HAD TO MAKE A FORCED LANDING!



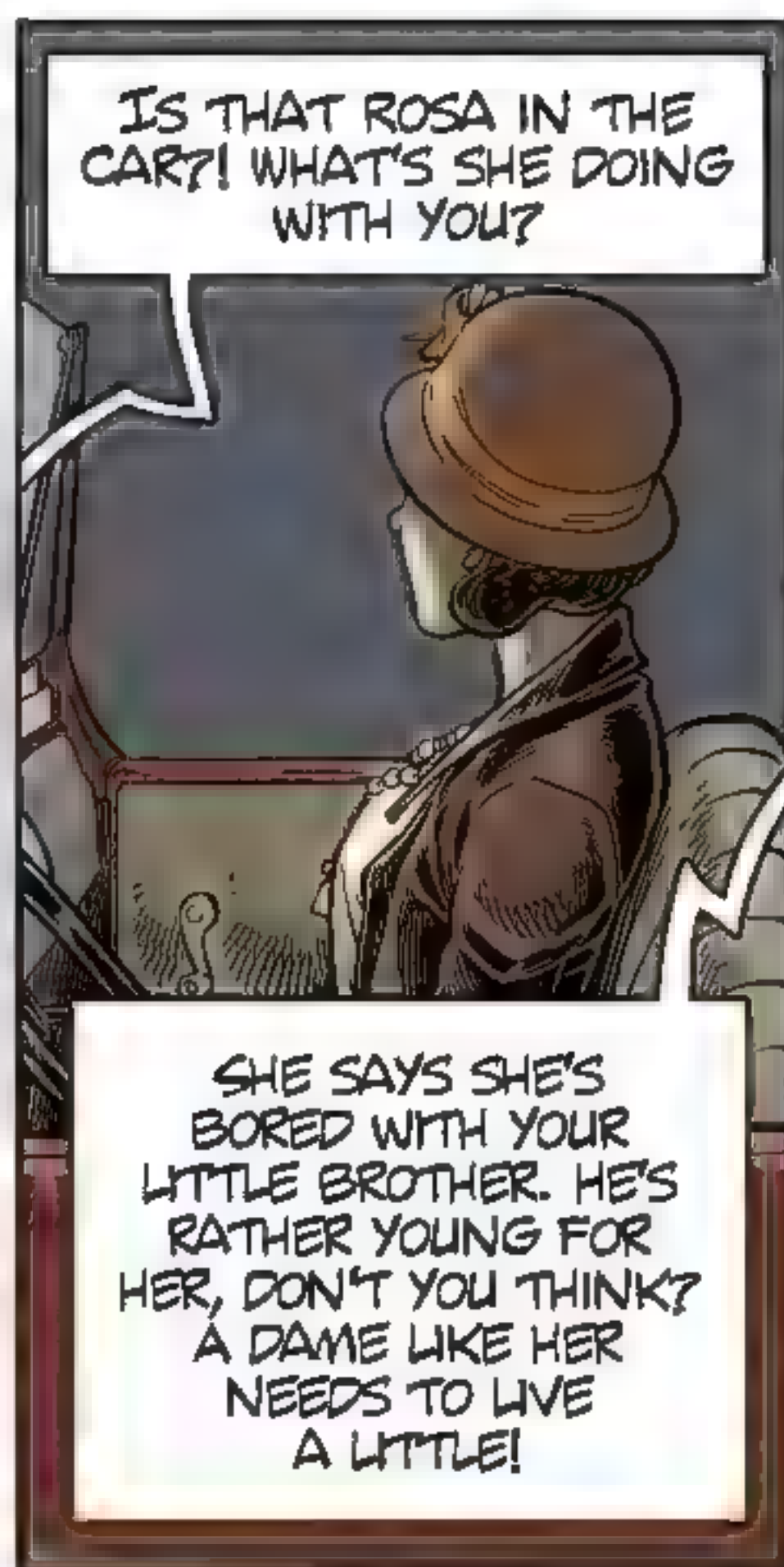
BUT I BROUGHT BACK THE DAMN DRUGS... AND WE CRACKED A BOTTLE OF CHAMPERS.





YOU'RE RIGHT, HUN! MY PROBLEM IS THAT YOU OWE ME SOME DOUGH.

I... I WAS COMING TO SEE YOU.



SHE SAYS SHE'S BORED WITH YOUR LITTLE BROTHER. HE'S RATHER YOUNG FOR HER, DON'T YOU THINK? A DAME LIKE HER NEEDS TO LIVE A LITTLE!



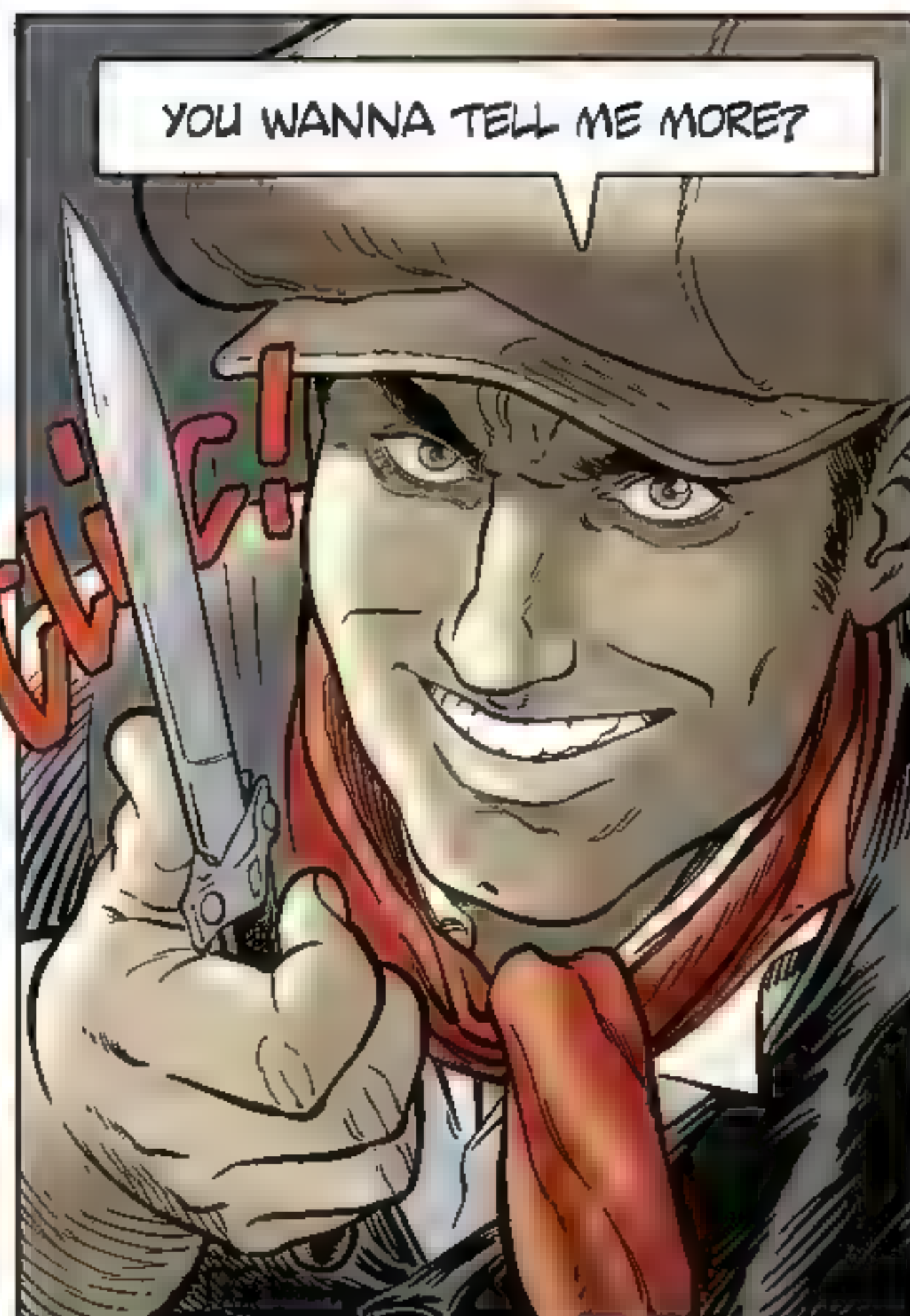
THAT'S NOT RIGHT.

FOR NOW, IT'S NOT YOUR PROBLEM, OK? JUST HAND OVER THE MONEY, HUN!

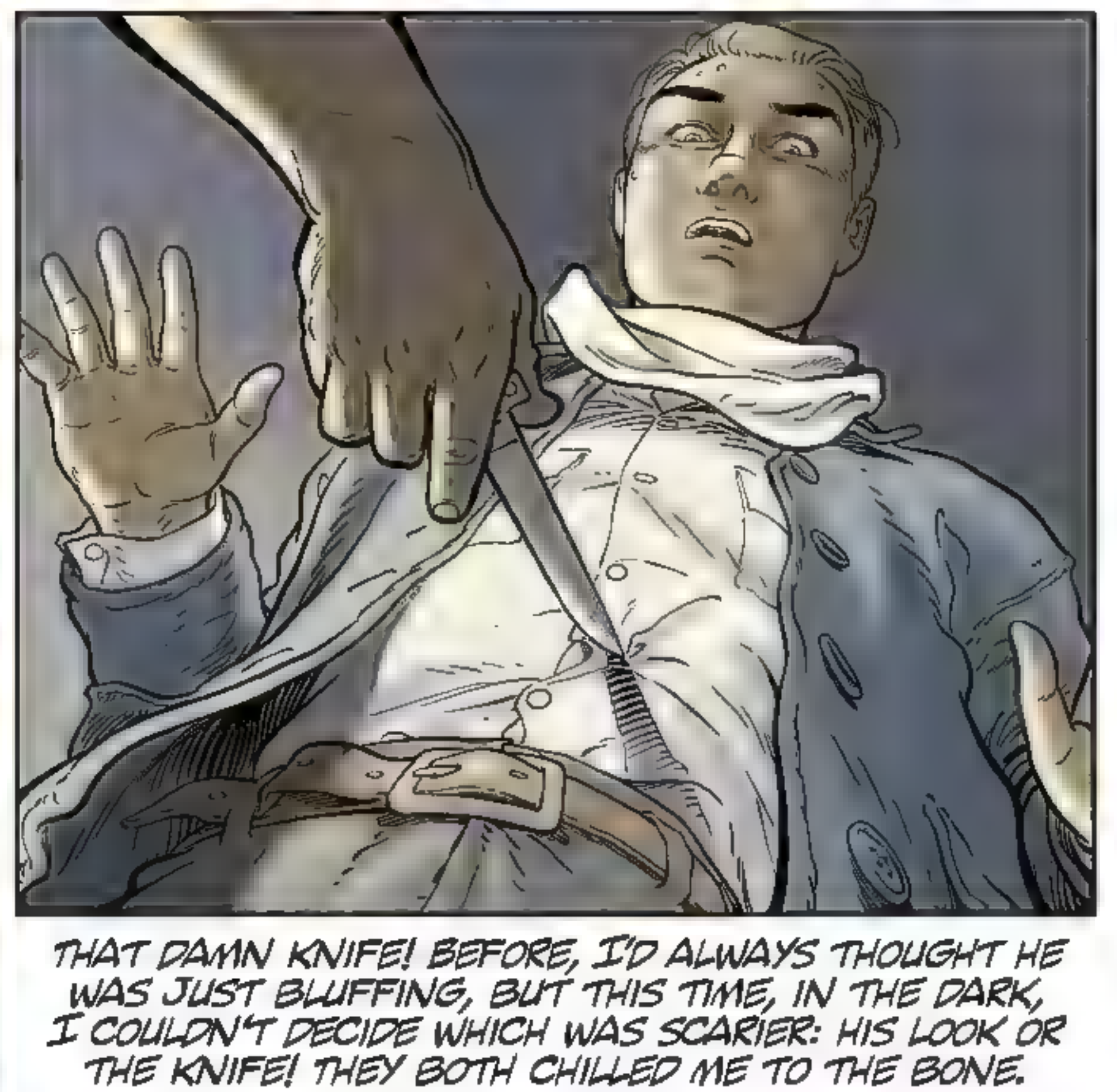


MOSES IS MY BROTHER, AND THAT'S NO WAY TO TREAT HIM!

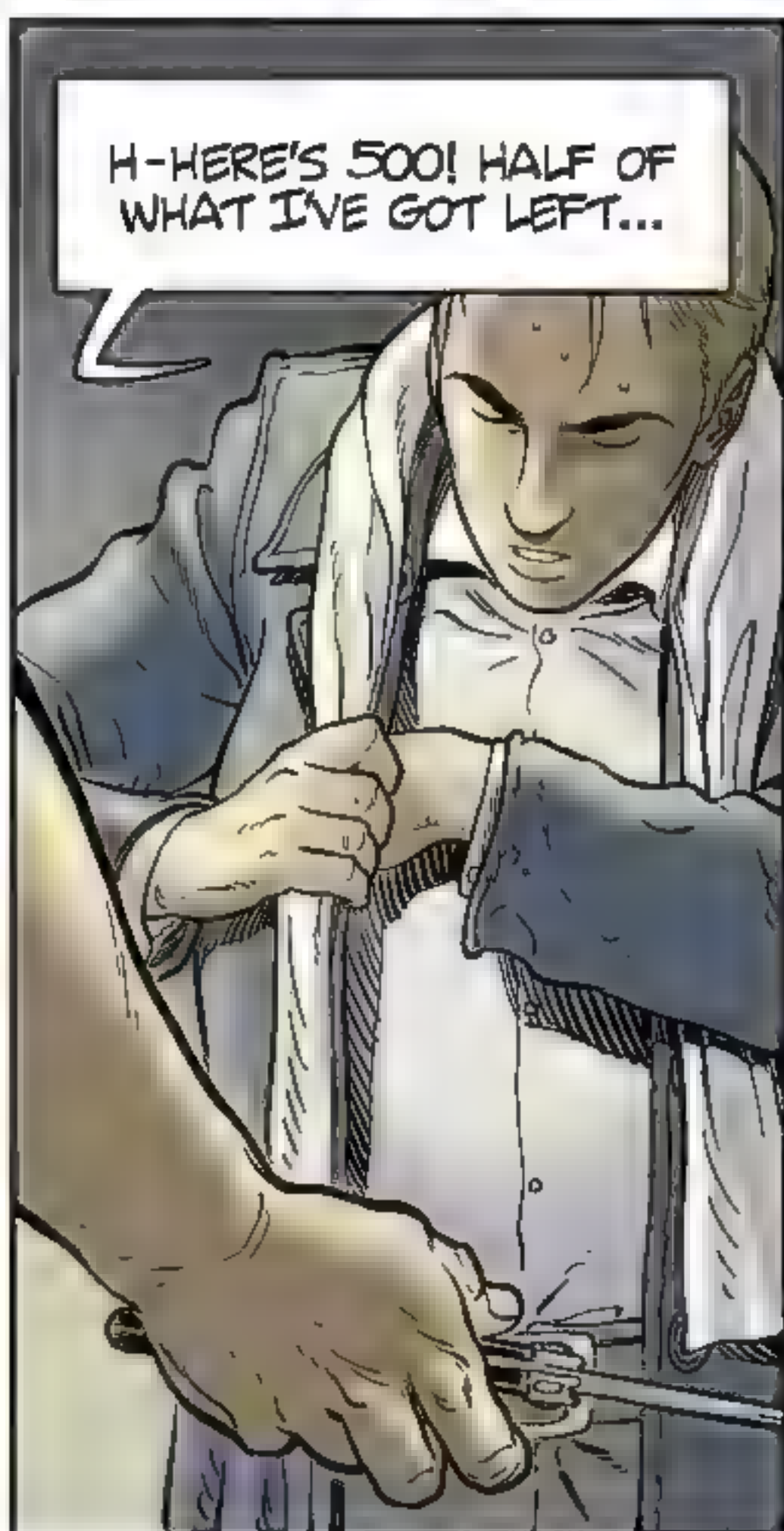
WHAAAT?! IS THE HUN STICKING UP FOR HIS BABY BROTHER?!



YOU WANNA TELL ME MORE?



THAT DAMN KNIFE! BEFORE, I'D ALWAYS THOUGHT HE WAS JUST BLUFFING, BUT THIS TIME, IN THE DARK, I COULDN'T DECIDE WHICH WAS SCARIER: HIS LOOK OR THE KNIFE! THEY BOTH CHILLED ME TO THE BONE.



H-HERE'S 500! HALF OF WHAT I'VE GOT LEFT...



ARE YOU KIDDING ME?

YOU'RE TRYING TO TELL ME SMILEY ONLY GAVE YOU A GRAND FOR FLYING A WHOLE PLANELOAD OF GOODS?



N-NO... BUT HE PAID FOR THE MAPS... AND OTHER EQUIPMENT I NEEDED FOR THE FLIGHT...

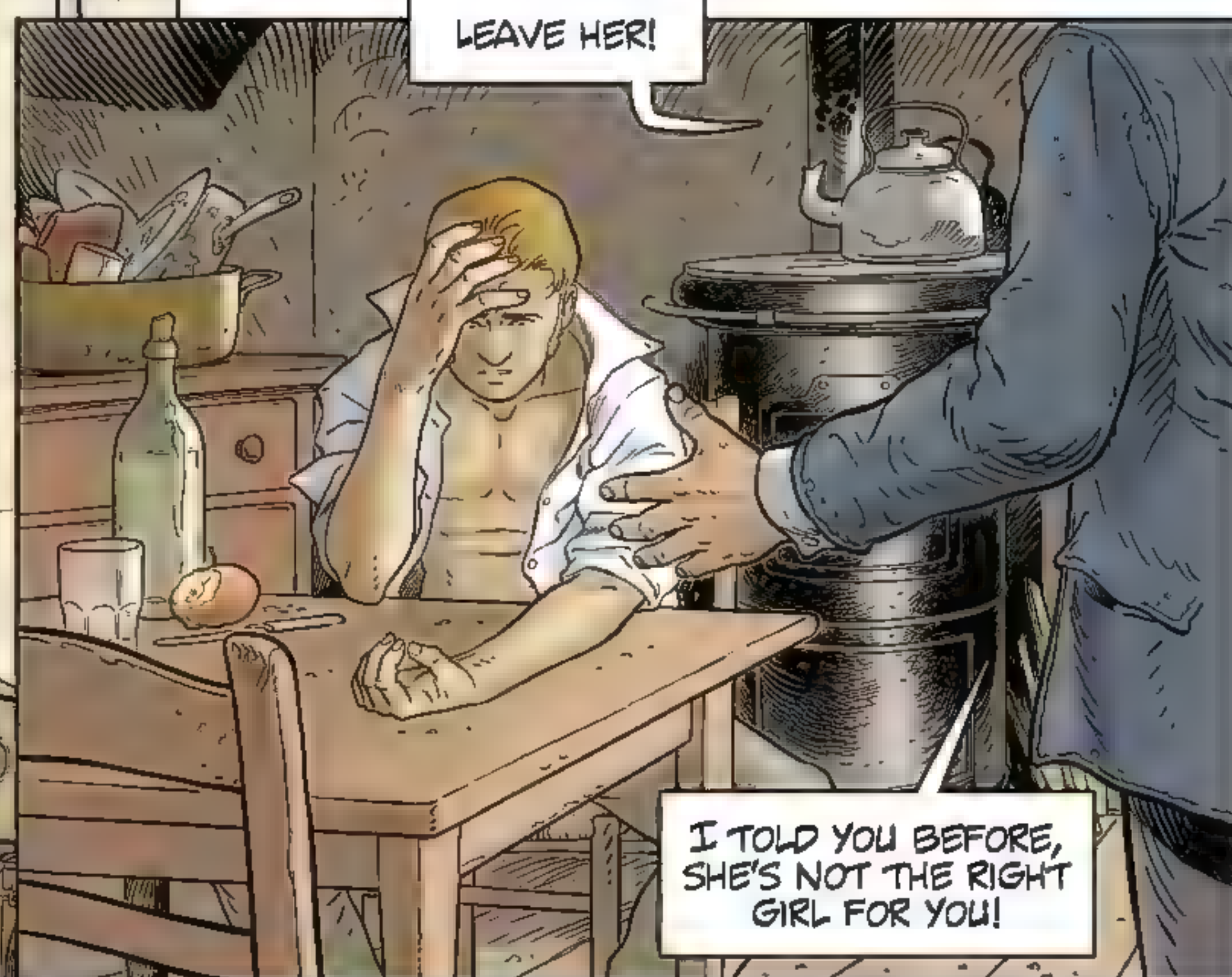
...AND I STILL HAVE TO BUY A PROPER CLOCK!





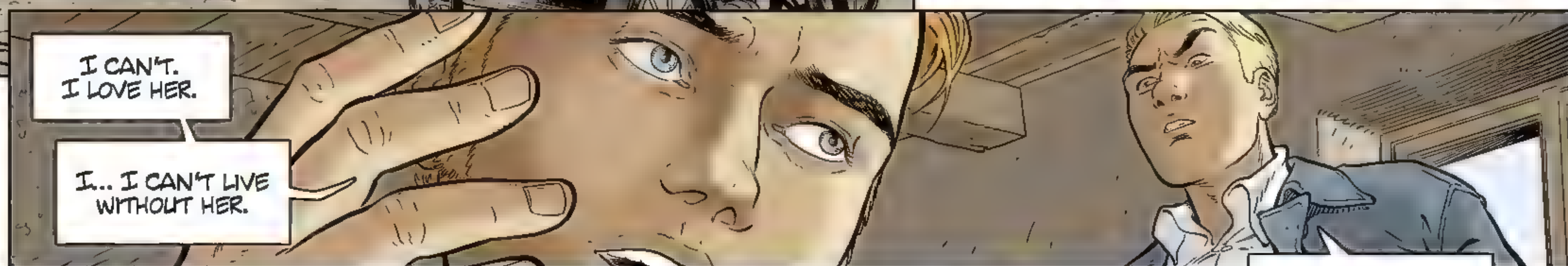


YEAH, ROSA SOMETIMES GOES OUT WITHOUT ME, BUT WHAT CAN I DO?



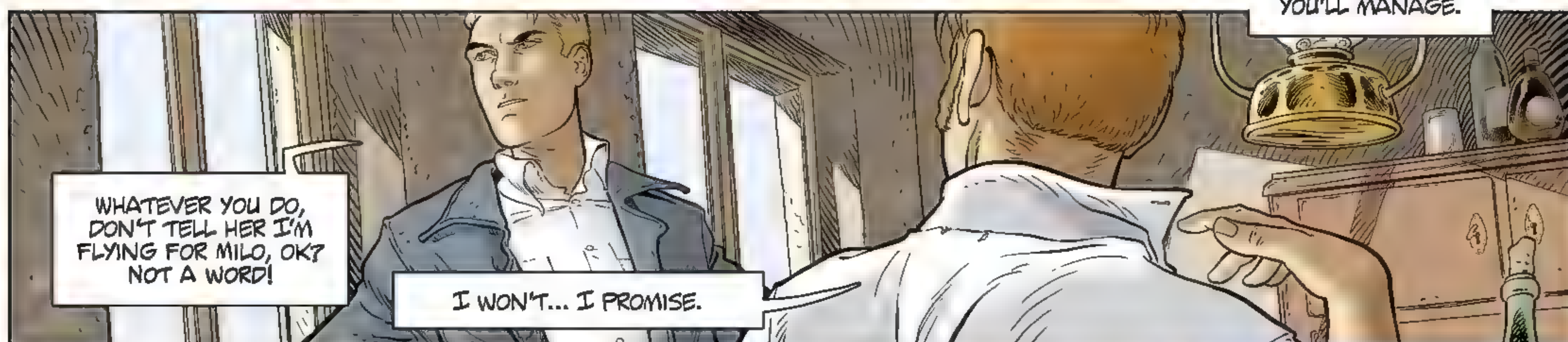
LEAVE HER!

I TOLD YOU BEFORE, SHE'S NOT THE RIGHT GIRL FOR YOU!



I CAN'T. I LOVE HER.

I... I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT HER.



WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T TELL HER I'M FLYING FOR MILO, OK? NOT A WORD!

I WON'T... I PROMISE.

YOU'LL MANAGE.



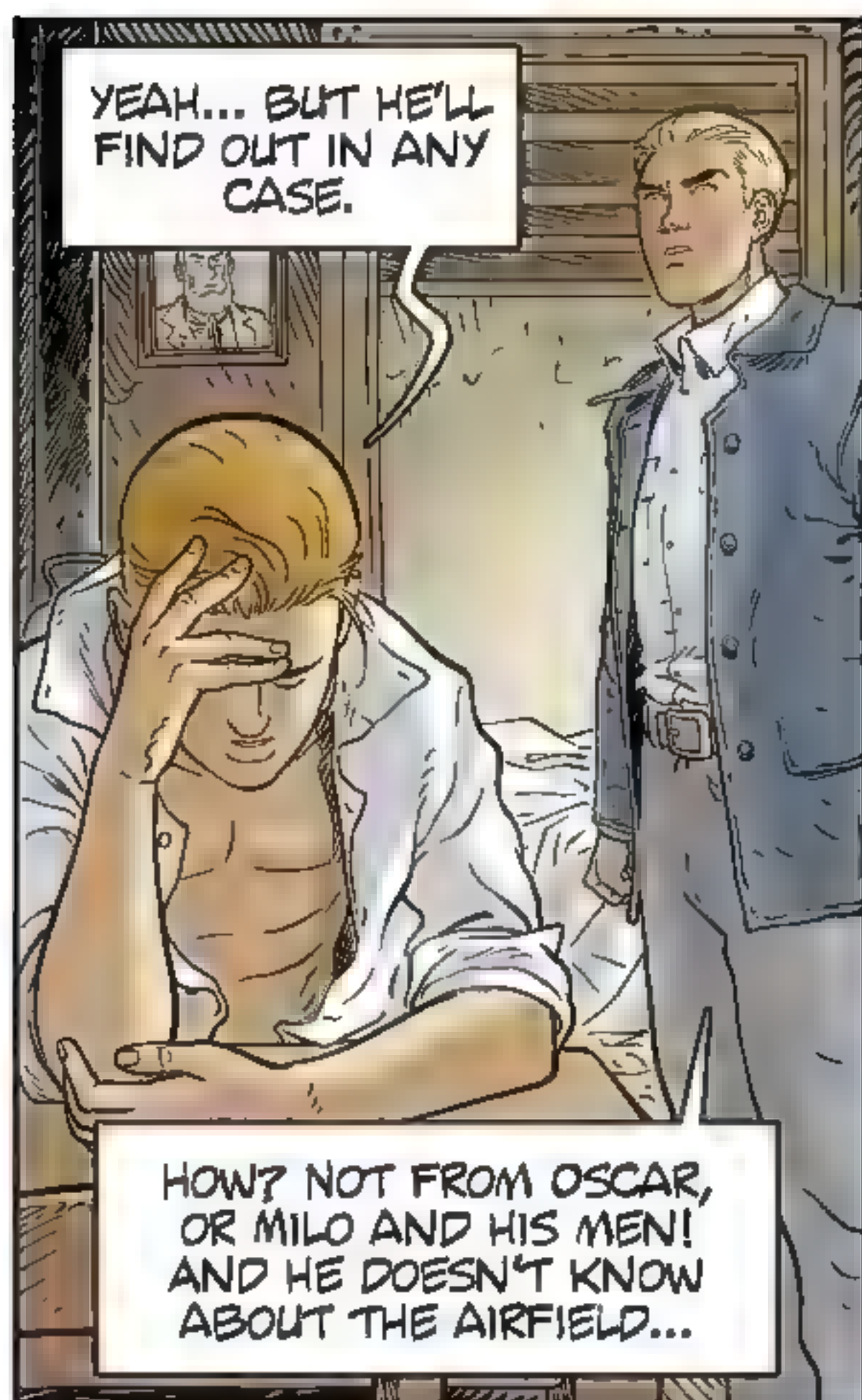
PFFF... WHAT A PIGSTY!



I'M SURE SHE'S GIVING INFO ON US TO EUSTACHE, AND I DON'T INTEND TO PAY HIM FIFTY PERCENT ON EVERY TRIP. I NEED THAT MONEY FOR MOTHER AND FOR MY PILOT'S LICENSE.



YOU GOT THAT, MOSES?



YEAH... BUT HE'LL FIND OUT IN ANY CASE.

HOW? NOT FROM OSCAR, OR MILO AND HIS MEN! AND HE DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT THE AIRFIELD...

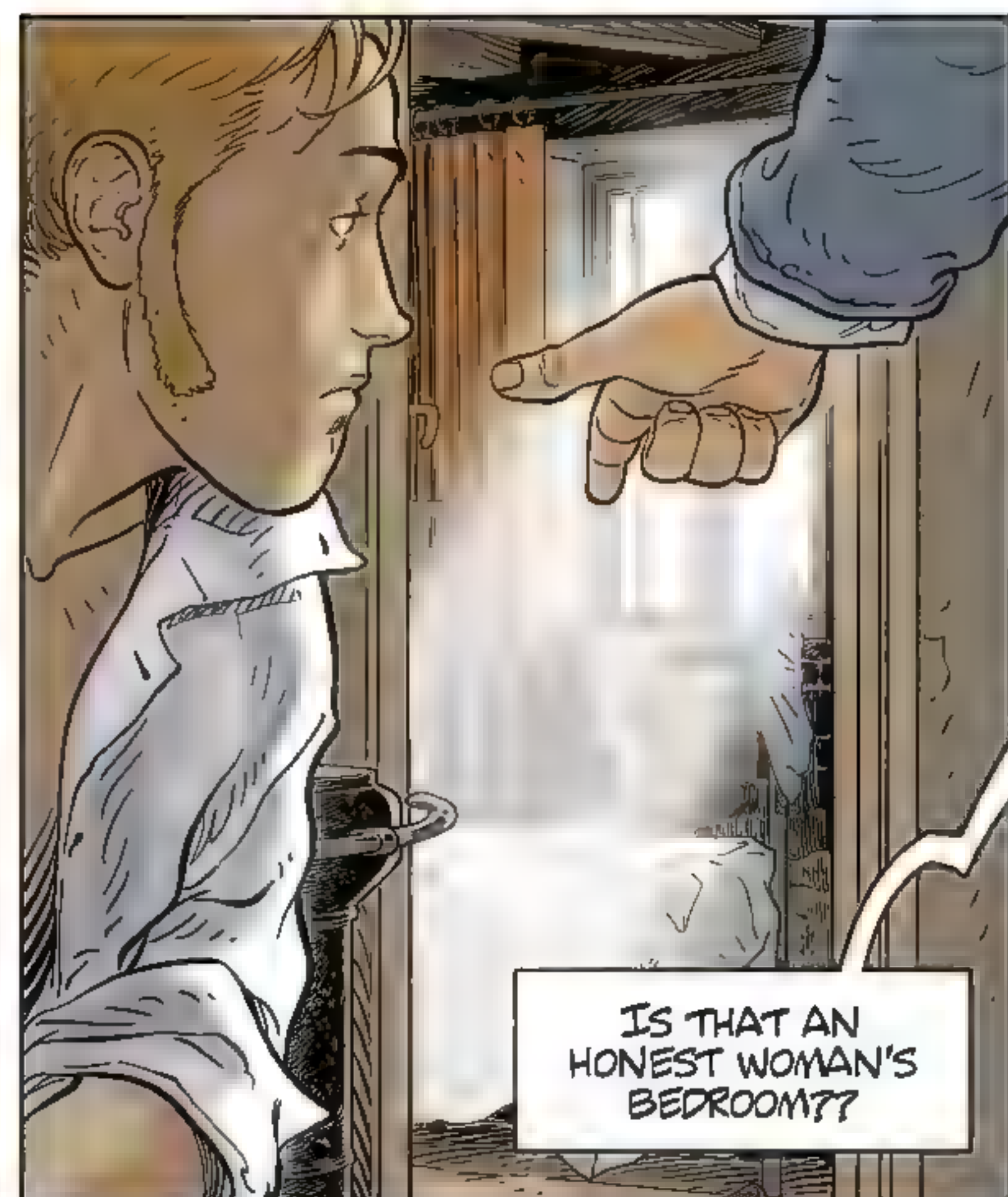


UNLESS YOU TOLD HIM... DID YOU?

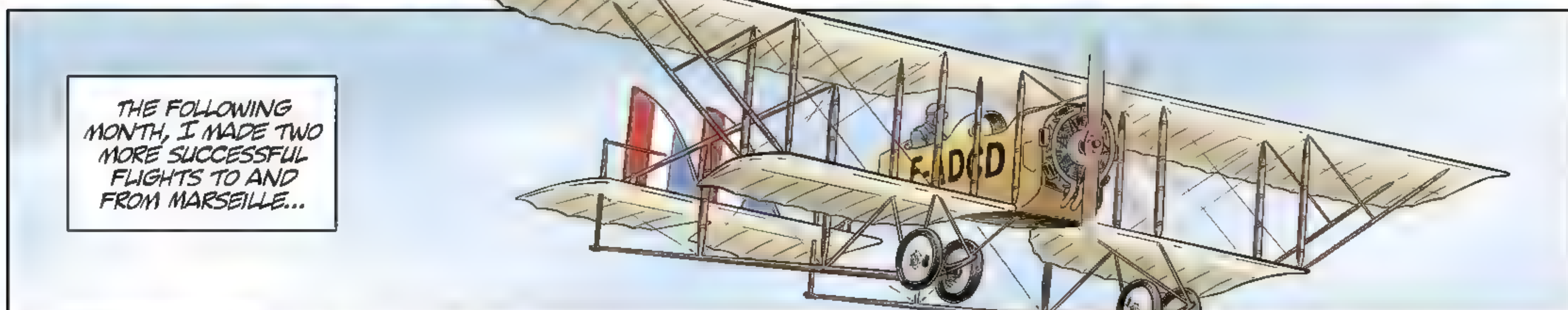
NO.

OR YOUR WHORE?

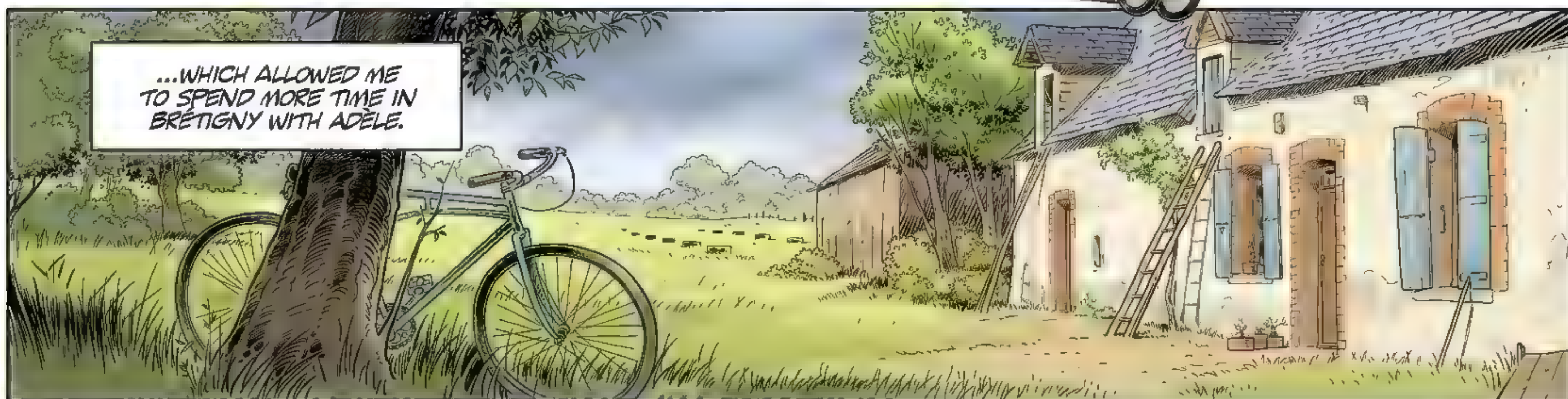
DON'T TALK ABOUT HER LIKE THAT.



IS THAT AN HONEST WOMAN'S BEDROOM??



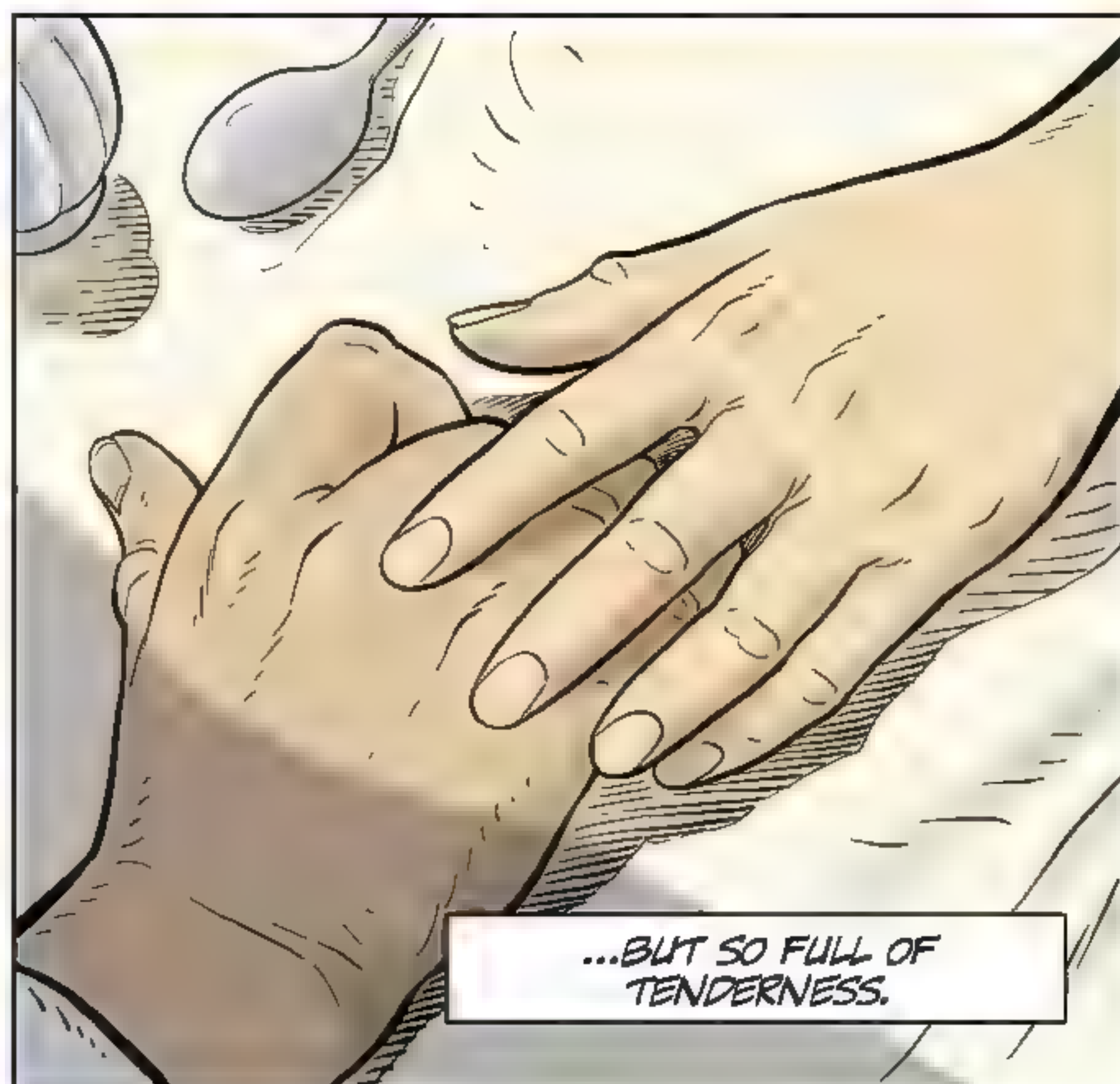
THE FOLLOWING MONTH, I MADE TWO MORE SUCCESSFUL FLIGHTS TO AND FROM MARSEILLE...



...WHICH ALLOWED ME TO SPEND MORE TIME IN BRETAGNY WITH ADELE.



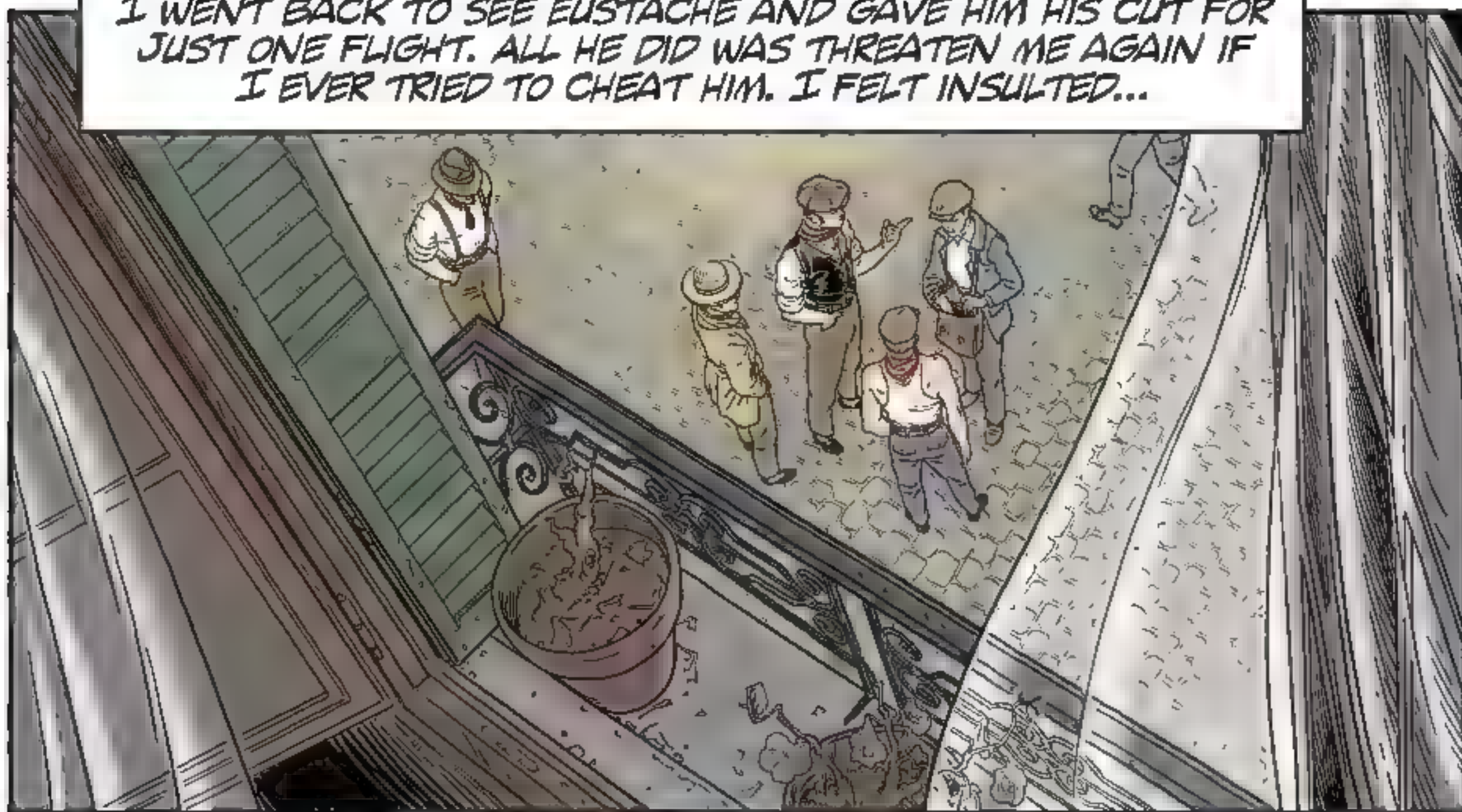
ALTHOUGH THEY DIDN'T LOOK ALIKE, ADELE REMINDED ME OF MY FIRST LOVE, SILKE. (1) BOTH OF THEM WERE OLDER THAN ME...



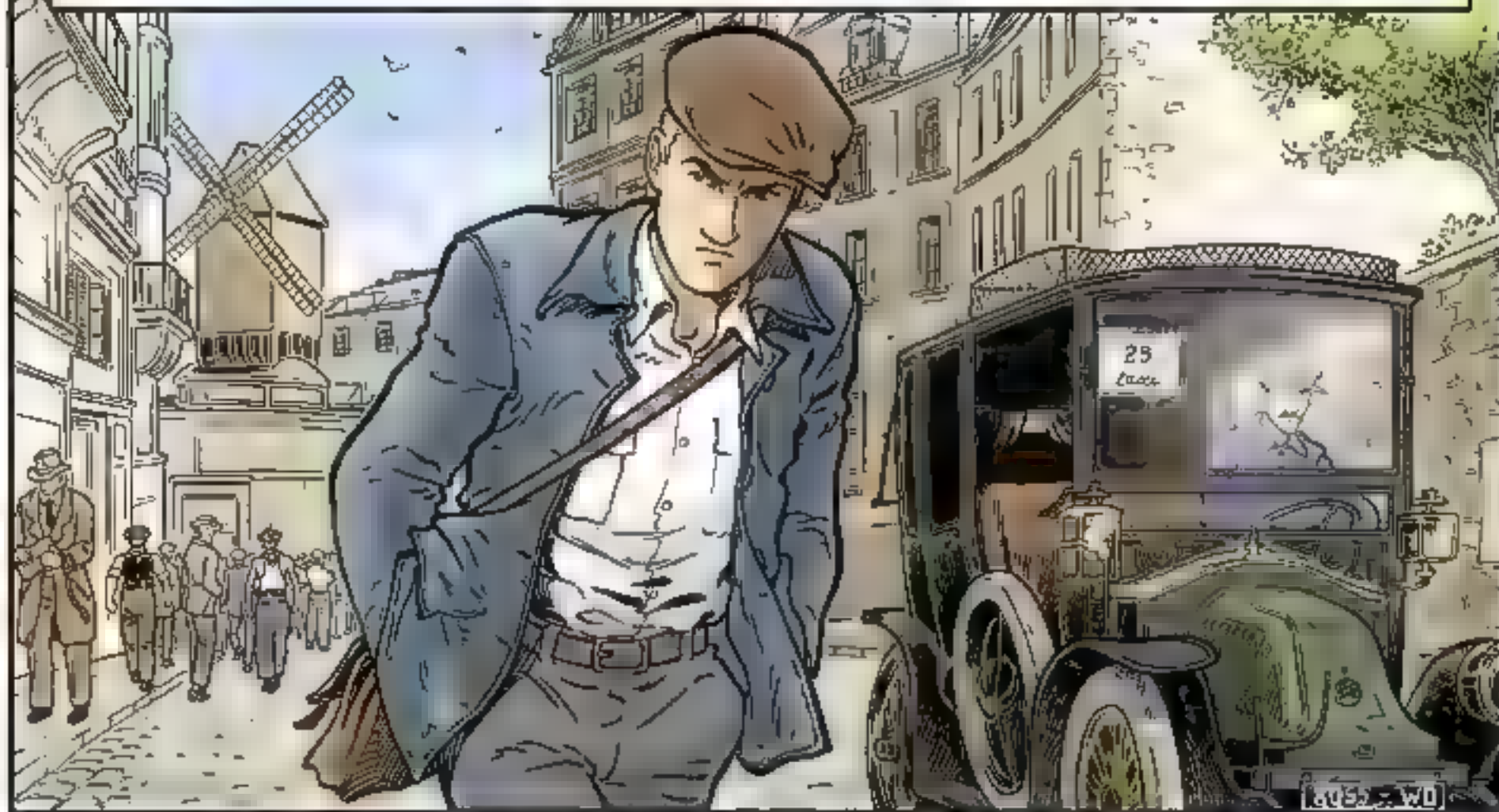
...BUT SO FULL OF TENDERNESS.

(1) SEE VOLUME 1, "TAKE-OFF."

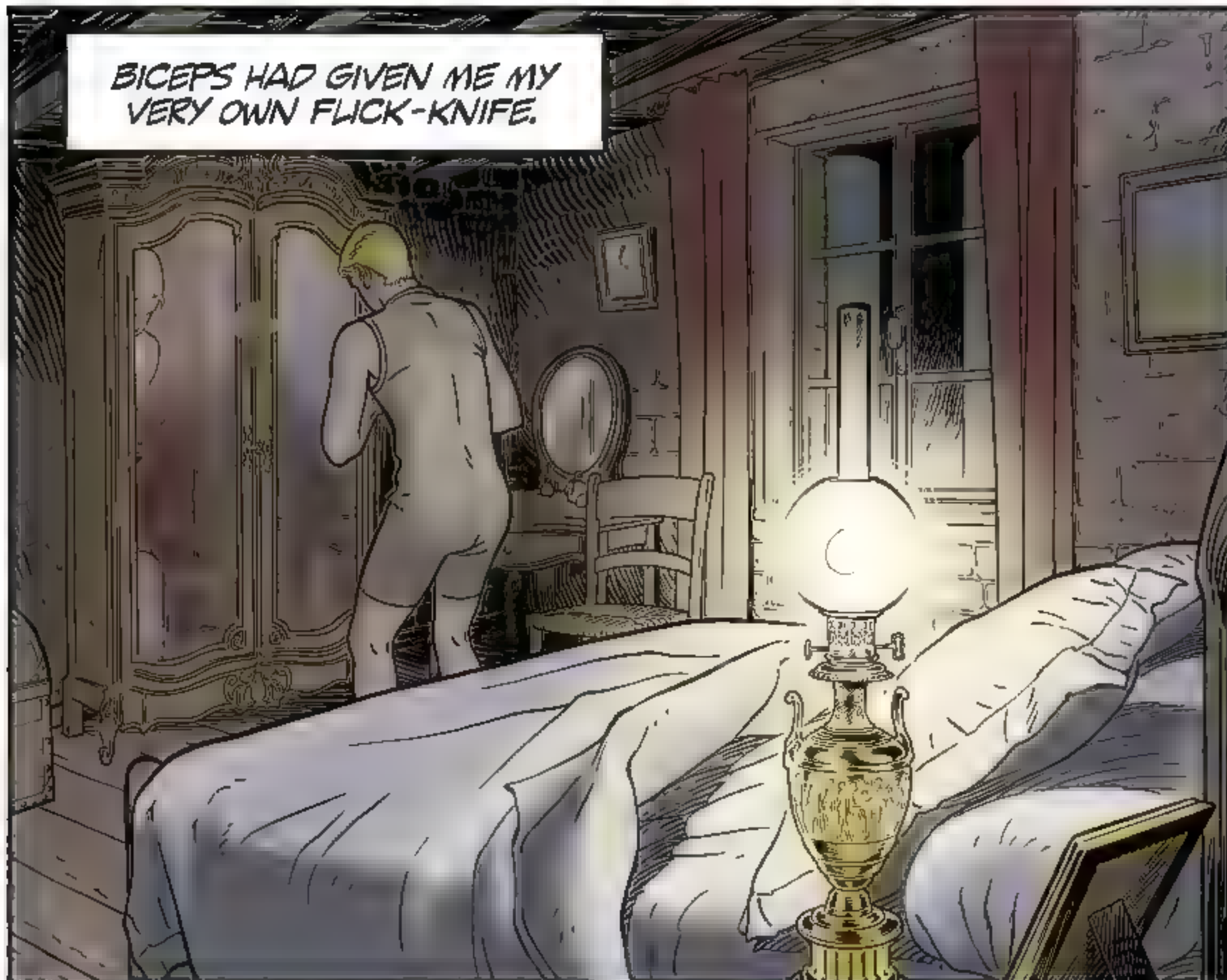
I WENT BACK TO SEE EUSTACHE AND GAVE HIM HIS CUT FOR JUST ONE FLIGHT. ALL HE DID WAS THREATEN ME AGAIN IF I EVER TRIED TO CHEAT HIM. I FELT INSULTED...



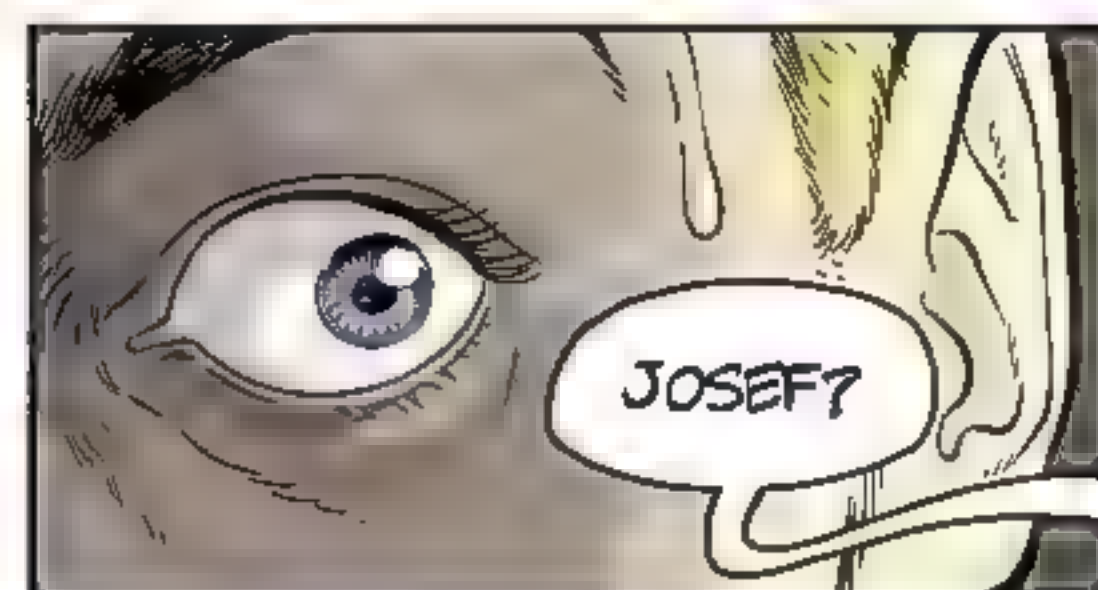
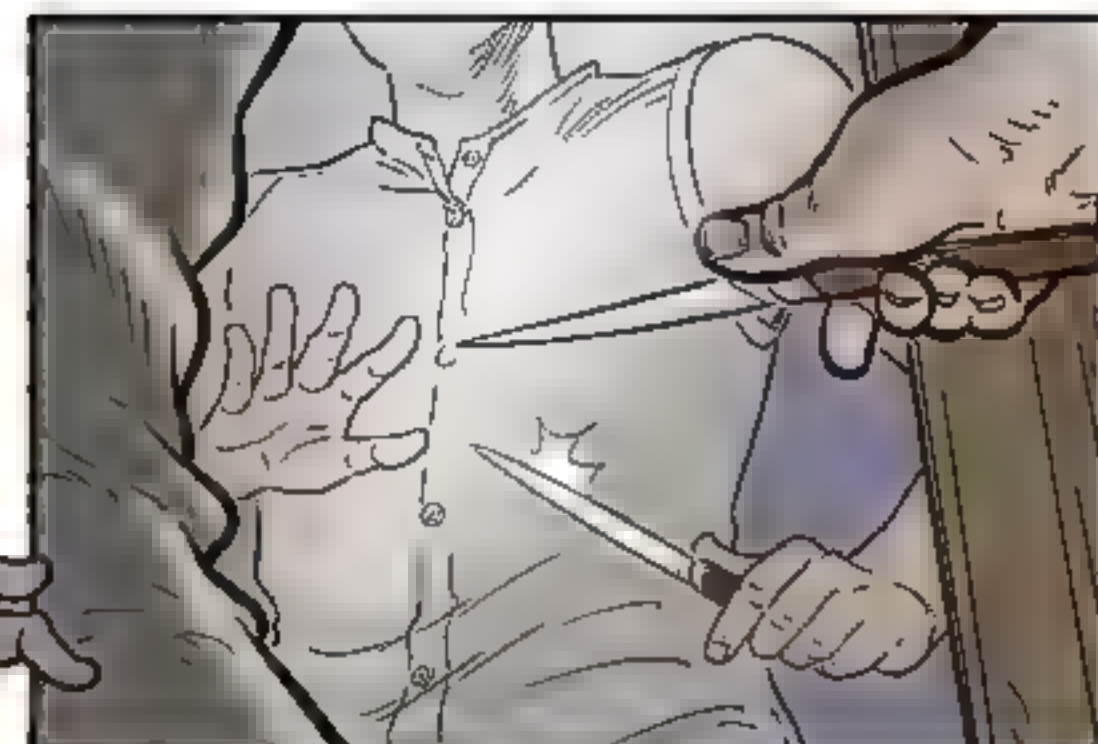
...BUT ALSO ENCOURAGED, SINCE HE OBVIOUSLY DIDN'T KNOW HOW MANY FLIGHTS I WAS MAKING. ALL THE SAME, I HAD TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS SITUATION. I WASN'T GOING TO LET MYSELF BE FLEECE, FOR GOD'S SAKE!



BICEPS HAD GIVEN ME MY VERY OWN FLICK-KNIFE.

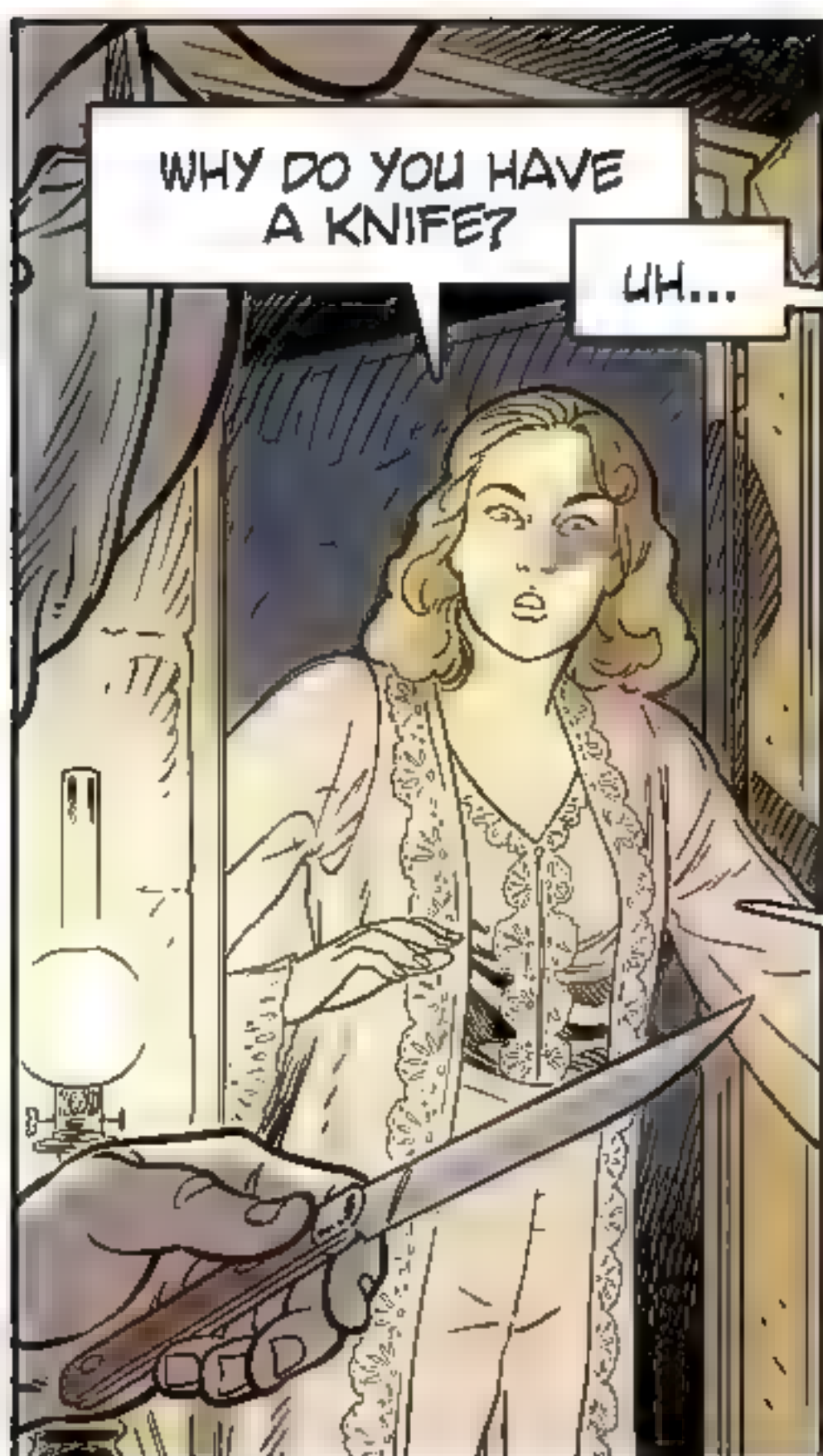


SHIT! JUST THE REFLECTION OF THE BLADE WAS ENOUGH TO GIVE ME THE HEEBIE-JEEBIES. I COULD ALREADY FEEL IT SLICING INTO MY GUTS. SO TO CHALLENGE EUSTACHE...?



WHY DO YOU HAVE A KNIFE?

UH...

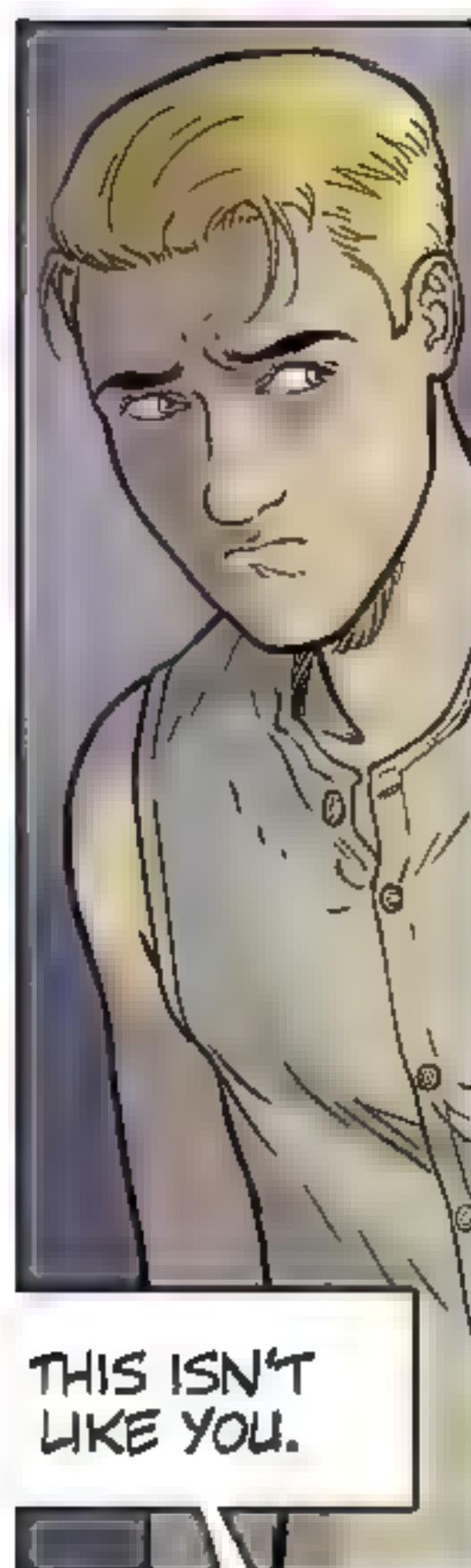


IT'S NOTHING... A DISAGREEMENT...

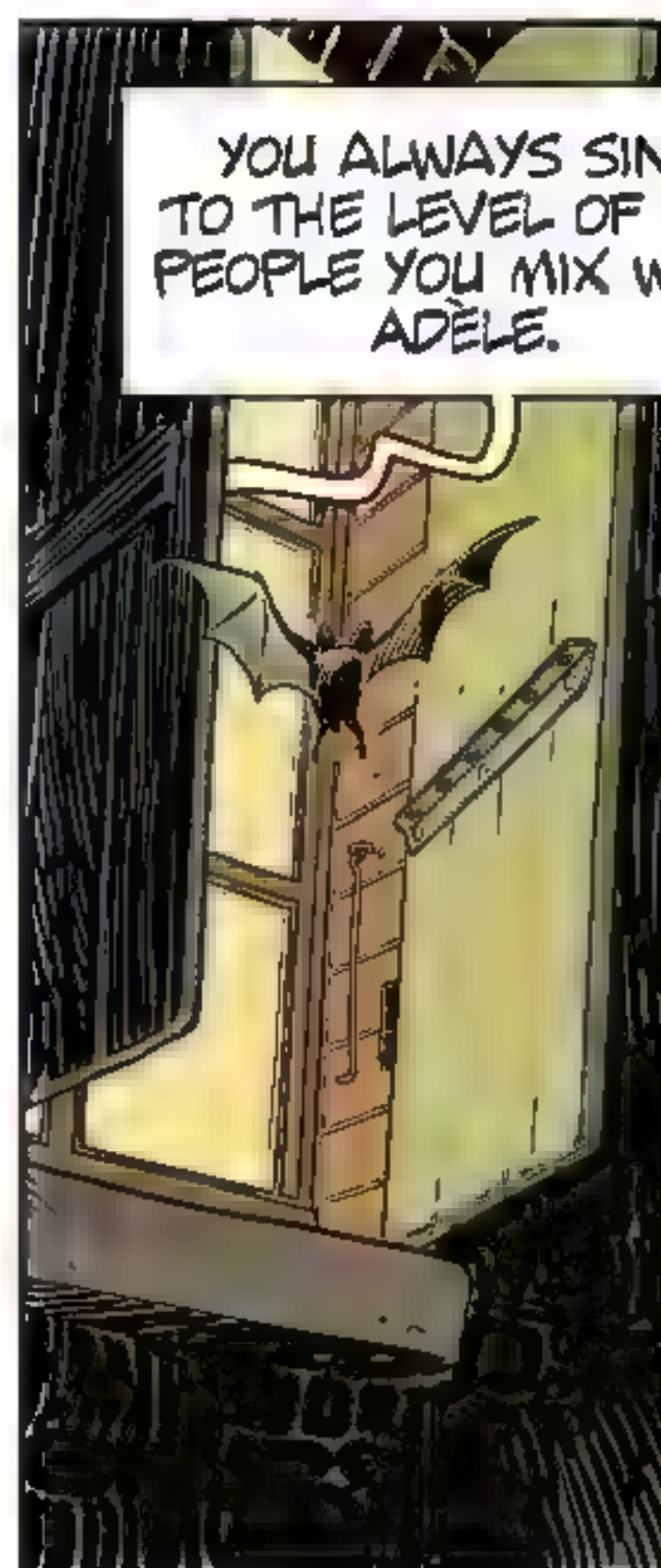
YOU SCARED ME...



THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU.



YOU ALWAYS SINK TO THE LEVEL OF THE PEOPLE YOU MIX WITH, ADELE.



THEN STOP, BEFORE YOU LOSE YOURSELF!



THREE MONTHS AND A FEW FLIGHTS LATER, I MOVED IN WITH ADELE. COWARD THAT I WAS, I'D ACCEPTED THAT EUSTACHE WOULD TAKE A CUT OF WHAT I EARNED, BUT I STILL HAD ENOUGH MONEY LEFT OVER FOR WHAT I NEEDED.

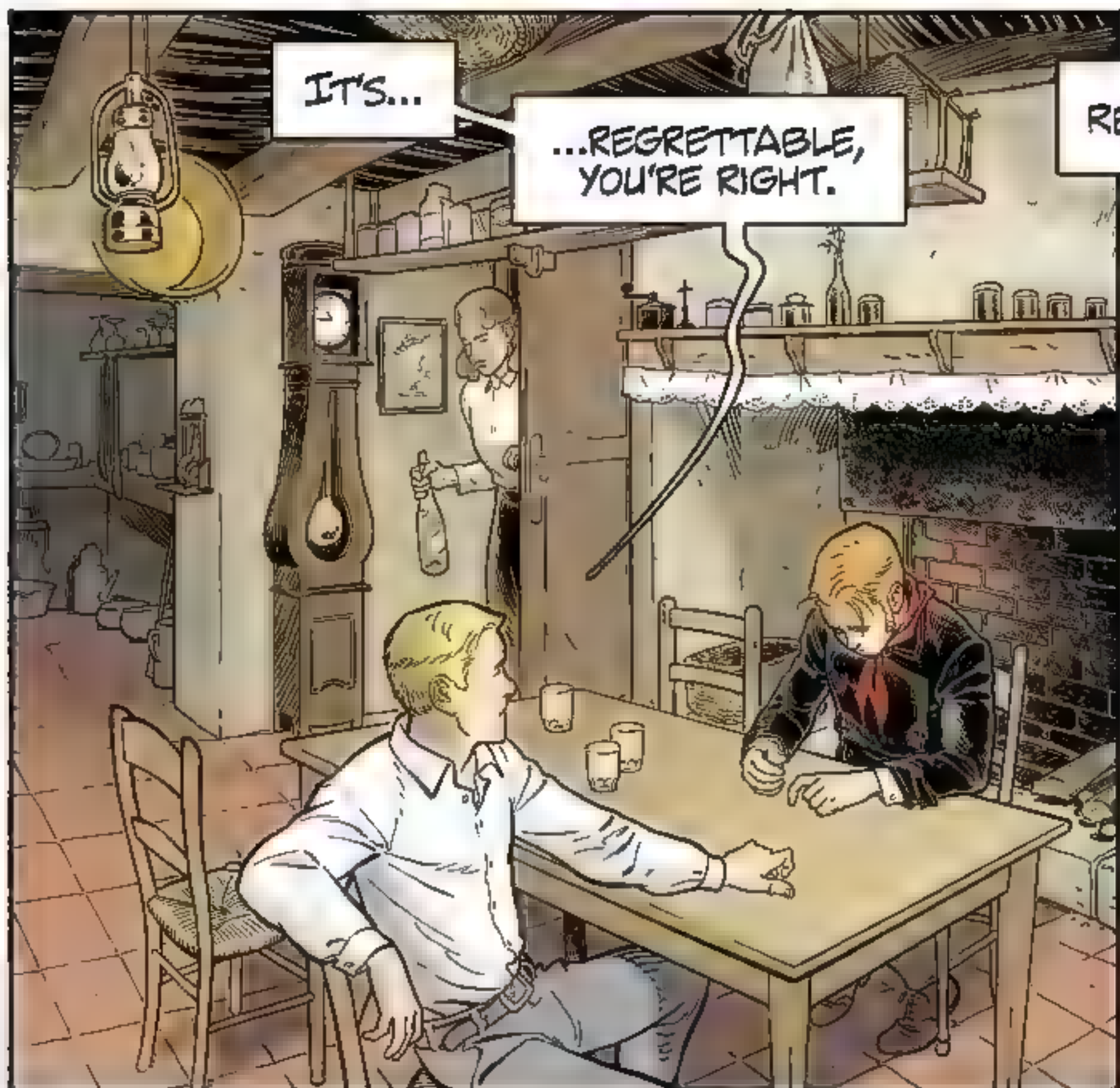
MY FAMILY WAS ABLE TO STAY IN MY UNCLE'S APARTMENT IN ISSY-LES-MOULINEAUX, AND I PACKED IN MY JOB AT THE CAUDRON FACTORY TO TAKE A COURSE AT THE LOUIS BLÉRIOT FLYING SCHOOL AT BUC, NEAR VERSAILLES.

NO ONE KNEW ME, SO I CLAIMED I WAS THE SON OF A WEALTHY STORE OWNER WHO WAS NUTS ABOUT FLYING.

ALTHOUGH I PRETENDED NOT TO KNOW ANYTHING, MY INSTRUCTOR COULD TELL I WAS A BORN PILOT, AND I MADE RAPID PROGRESS.

HAVING SAILED THROUGH MY FIRST EXAM, I SIGNED UP FOR A LICENSE TO FLY PASSENGER PLANES. VERY FEW PILOTS HAD ONE, AND IT WOULD OPEN THE DOOR TO ALL THE NEW AIRLINES THAT WERE SPRINGING UP. MY ULTIMATE DREAM!

BUT YOU KNOW HOW IT IS WITH THE SCHEMES OF MICE AND MEN... LIFE, THAT TRICKSTER, SEEMS TO HAVE A KNACK FOR RUINING THEM. IN FACT, IT SEEMS TO GET A KICK OUT OF MESSING THINGS UP FOR YOU.

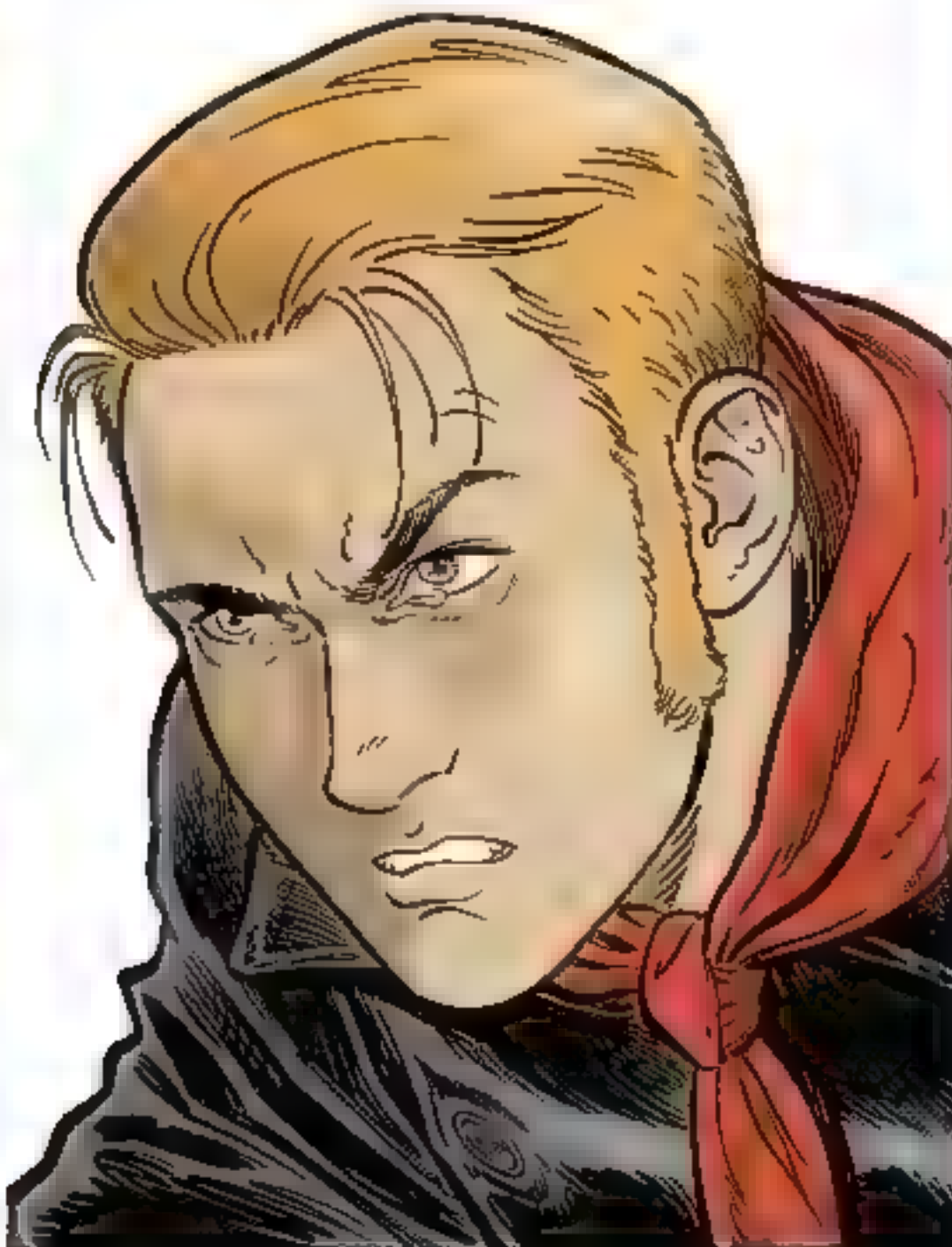


IT'S...

...REGRETTABLE, YOU'RE RIGHT.

REGRETTABLE?

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?



IT'S REVOLTING, THAT'S WHAT IT IS!! I LOVE HER!

?

I WAS GONNA MARRY HER!



CALM DOWN, MOSES! IT WOULD'VE BEEN REVOLTING IF SHE'D BEEN AN HONEST WOMAN, BUT A TEASE LIKE THAT?

WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? DIDN'T I WARN YOU?



IT'S THAT BASTARD EUSTACHE WHO SEDUCED HER, WITH HIS CAR, AND HIS FANCY SUITS, AND HIS DOUGH! BUT I KNOW SHE DOESN'T LOVE HIM. IT'S ME SHE LOVES!

LIKE I SAID, SHE'S A FLIRT AND IT'S REGRETTABLE! YOU CAN DO BETTER, MOSES. FORGET HER!



I'M GONNA--

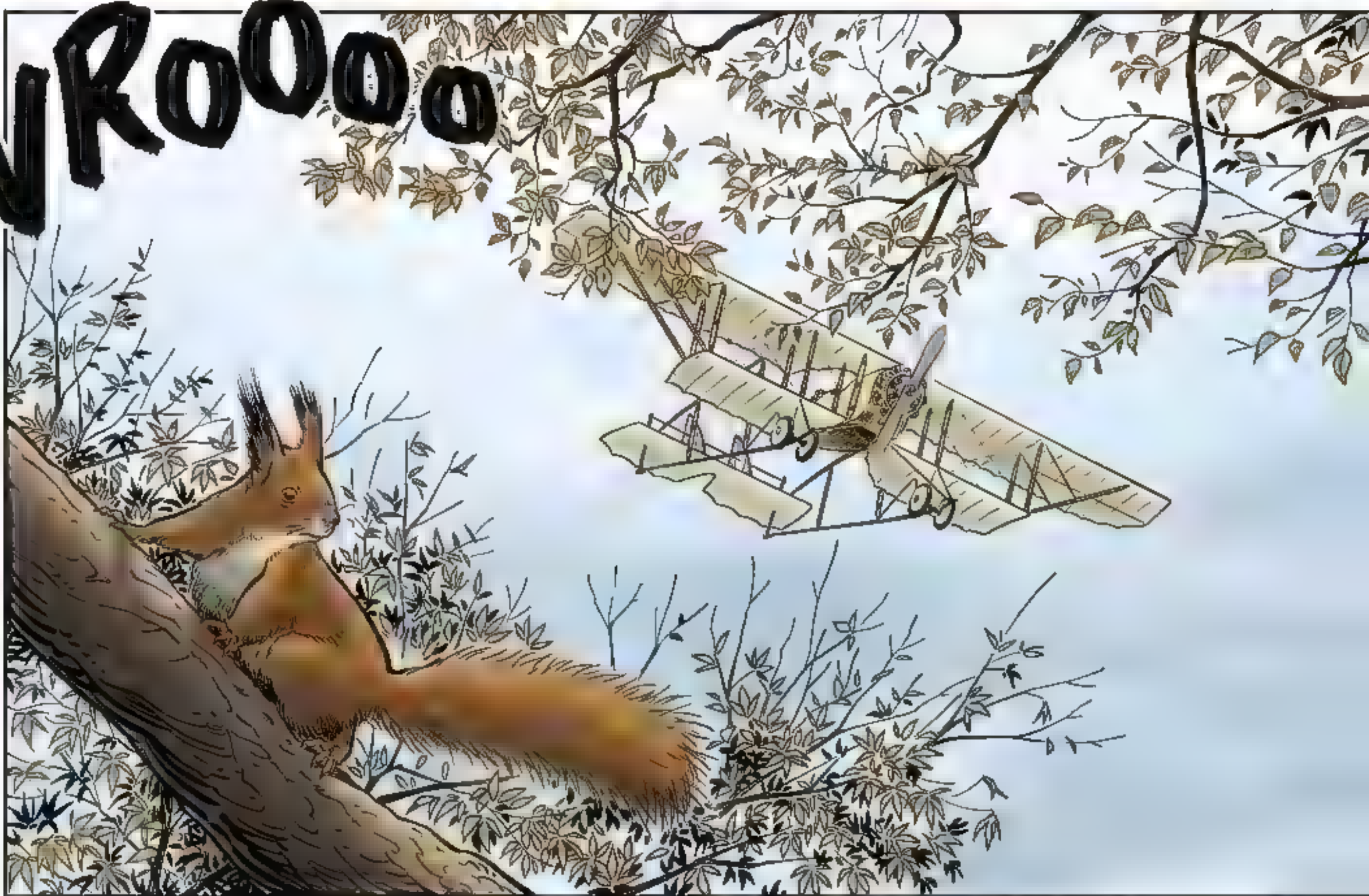
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING, MOSES!

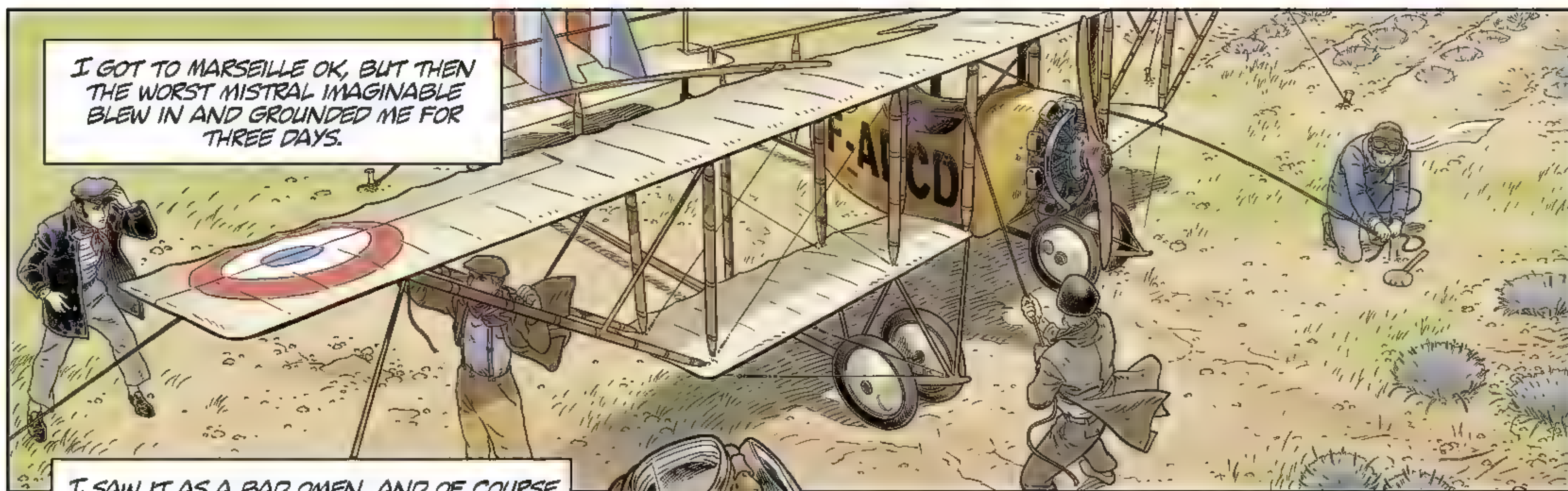


I'M FLYING TOMORROW. STAY HERE WITH ADELE, AND WE'LL TALK SOME MORE WHEN I GET BACK.

ALL RIGHT?

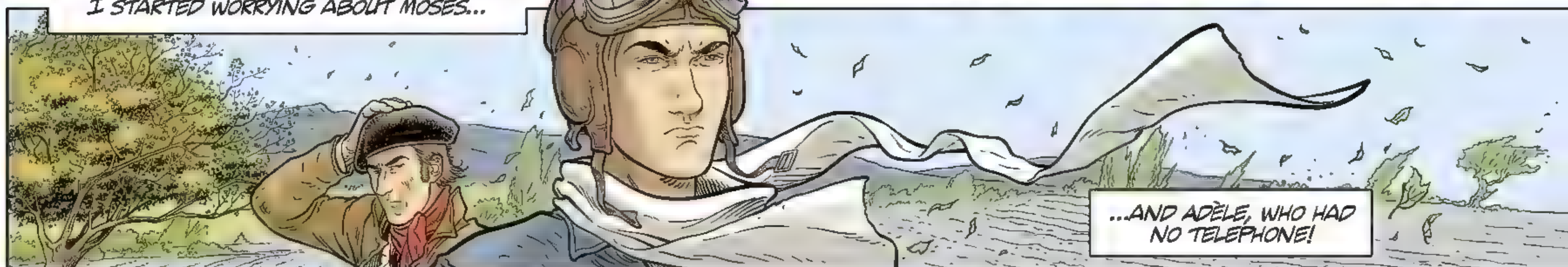
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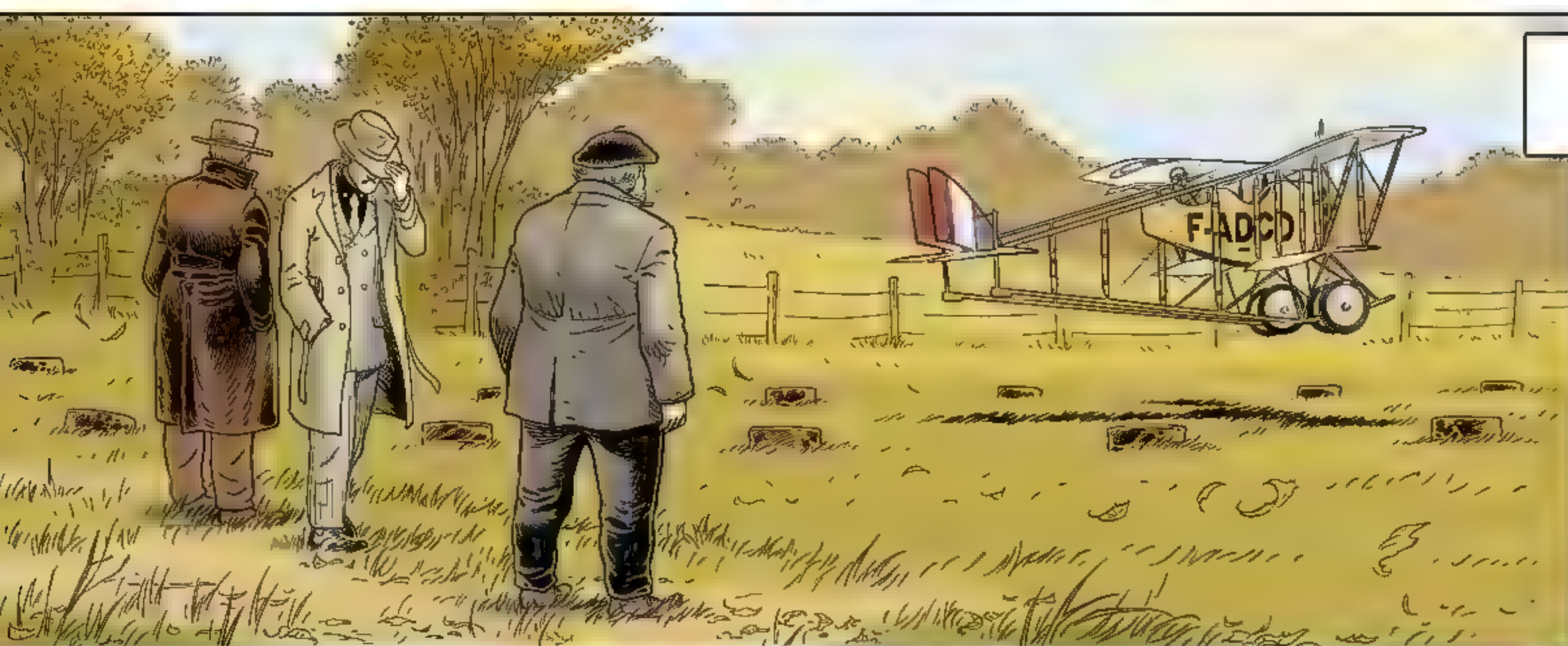


I GOT TO MARSEILLE OK, BUT THEN THE WORST MISTRAL IMAGINABLE BLEW IN AND GROUNDED ME FOR THREE DAYS.

I SAW IT AS A BAD OMEN, AND OF COURSE I STARTED WORRYING ABOUT MOSES...



...AND ADELE, WHO HAD NO TELEPHONE!



WHERE'S MOSES?
I DON'T SEE HIM.



UH... WELL... YOU SEE...

WHAT??

UH... IT'S NOT GOOD NEWS, I'M AFRAID, JOSEF.

SPIT IT OUT!



UH... MOSES... HE...

HE CHALLENGED EUSTACHE TO A DUEL AT THE CAMP IN SAINT-OUEN...

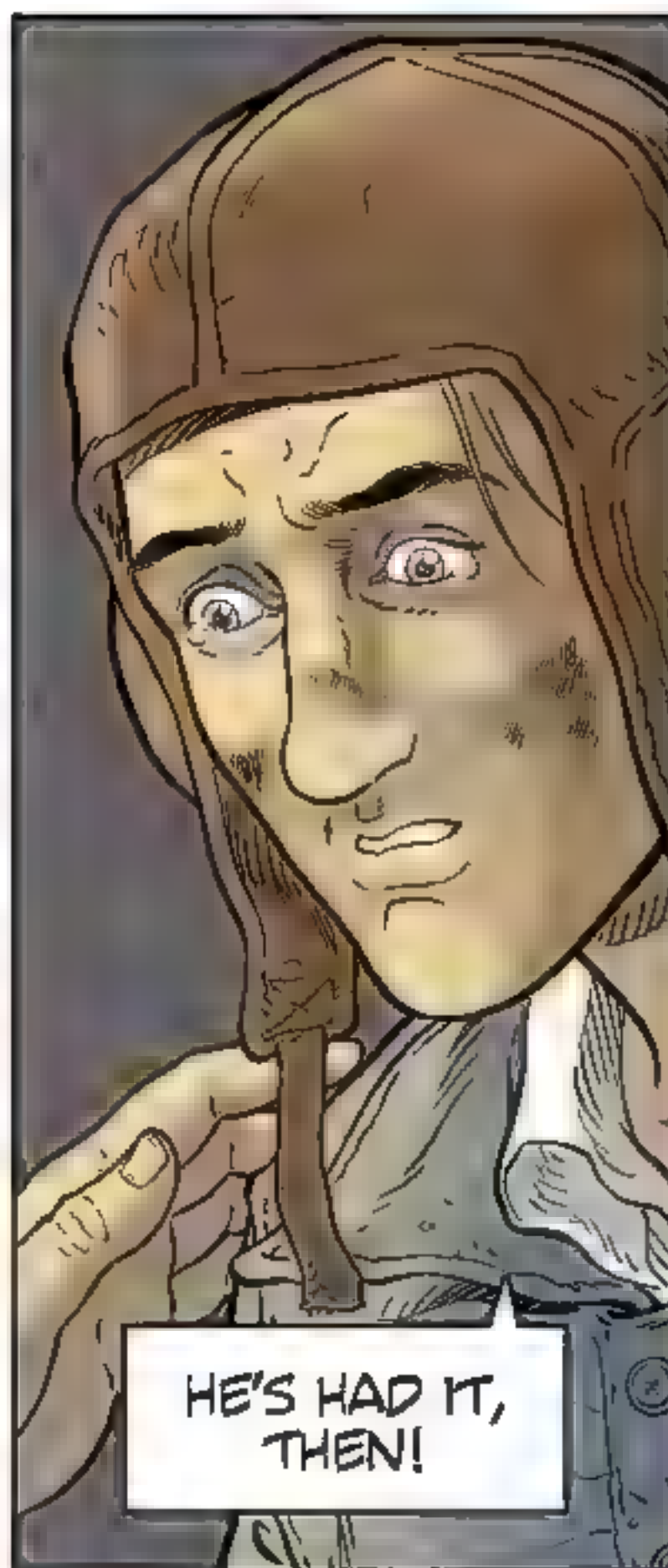


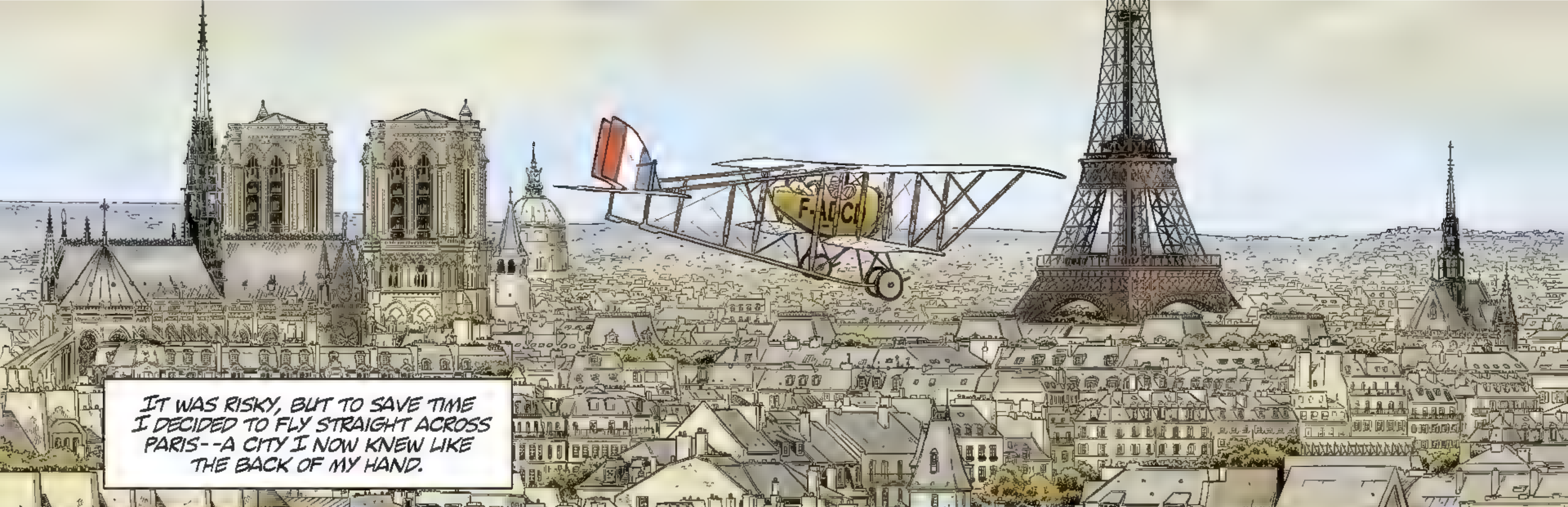
I FELT THAT SUDDEN CHILL THAT RUNS DOWN YOUR SPINE AND INTO YOUR STOMACH LIKE A GLASS OF ICE WATER, LEAVING YOUR HEAD EMPTY AND SILENTLY ECHOING... JUST LIKE THE TIME MY FATHER TOLD ME THAT SILKE WAS DEAD...



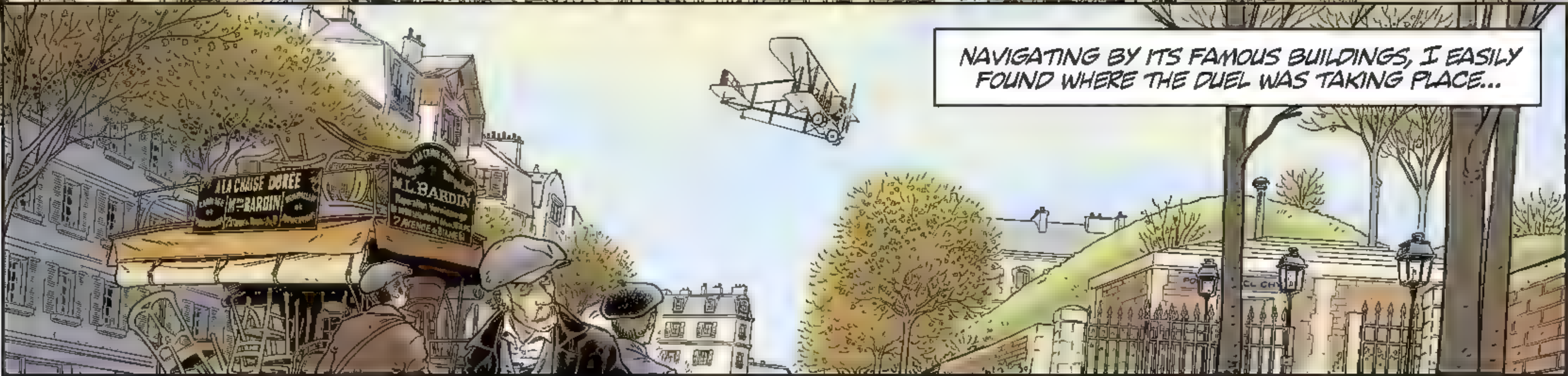
IS... IS HE...?

I DON'T KNOW.





IT WAS RISKY, BUT TO SAVE TIME I DECIDED TO FLY STRAIGHT ACROSS PARIS--A CITY I NOW KNEW LIKE THE BACK OF MY HAND.



NAVIGATING BY ITS FAMOUS BUILDINGS, I EASILY FOUND WHERE THE DUEL WAS TAKING PLACE...

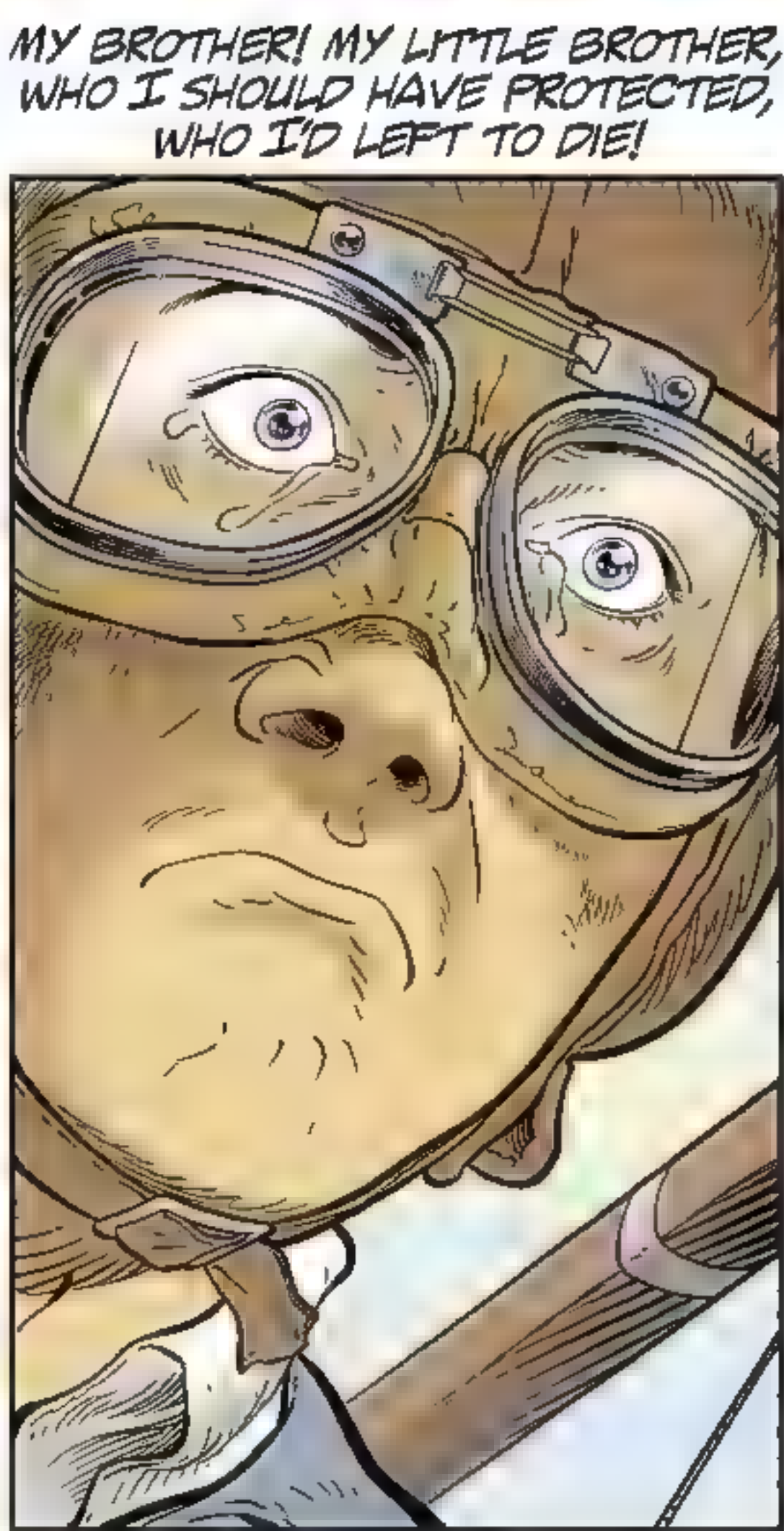


...OR RATHER, HAD JUST FINISHED!

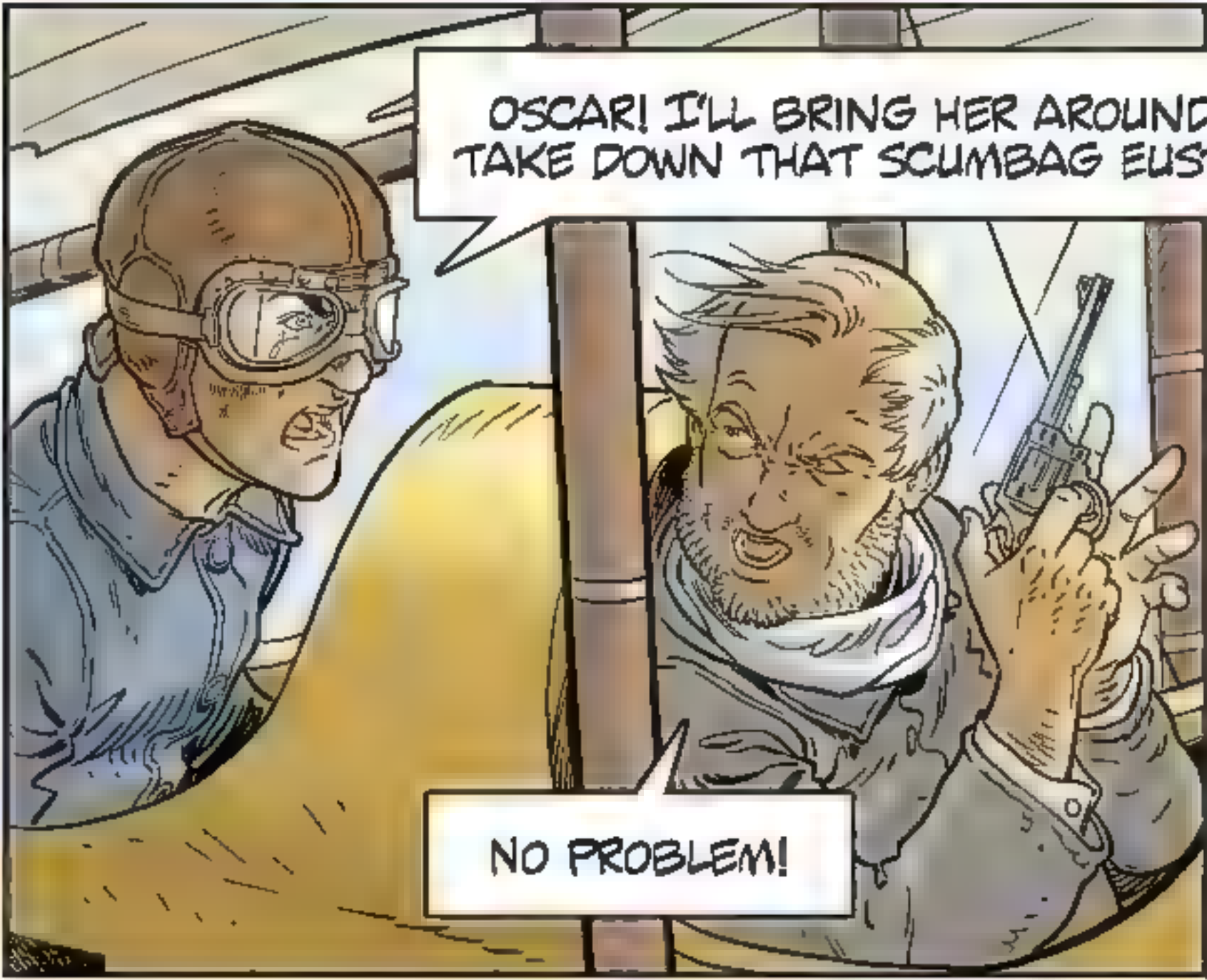


MOSES WAS LYING ON THE GRASS.

MEIN GOTT!!

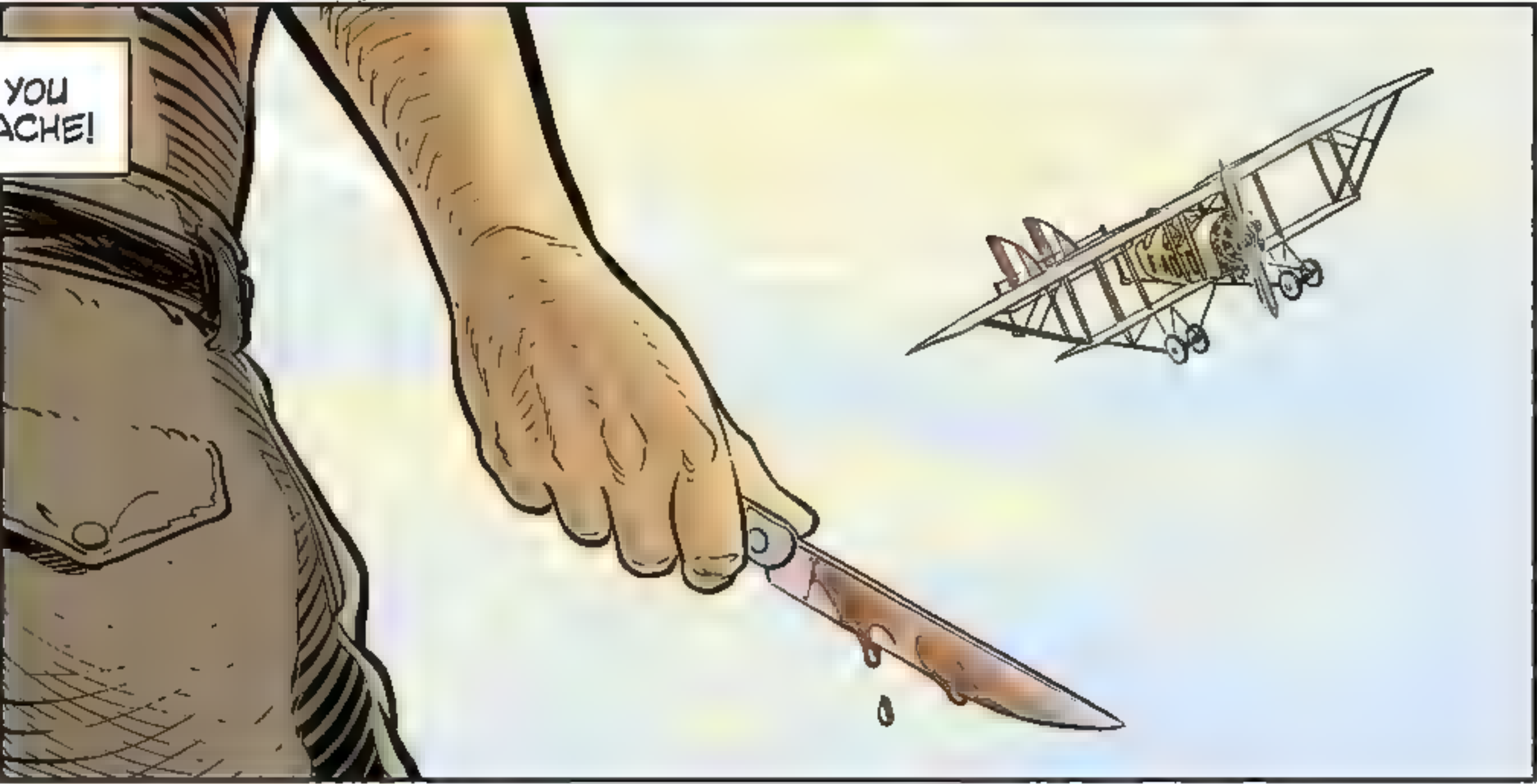


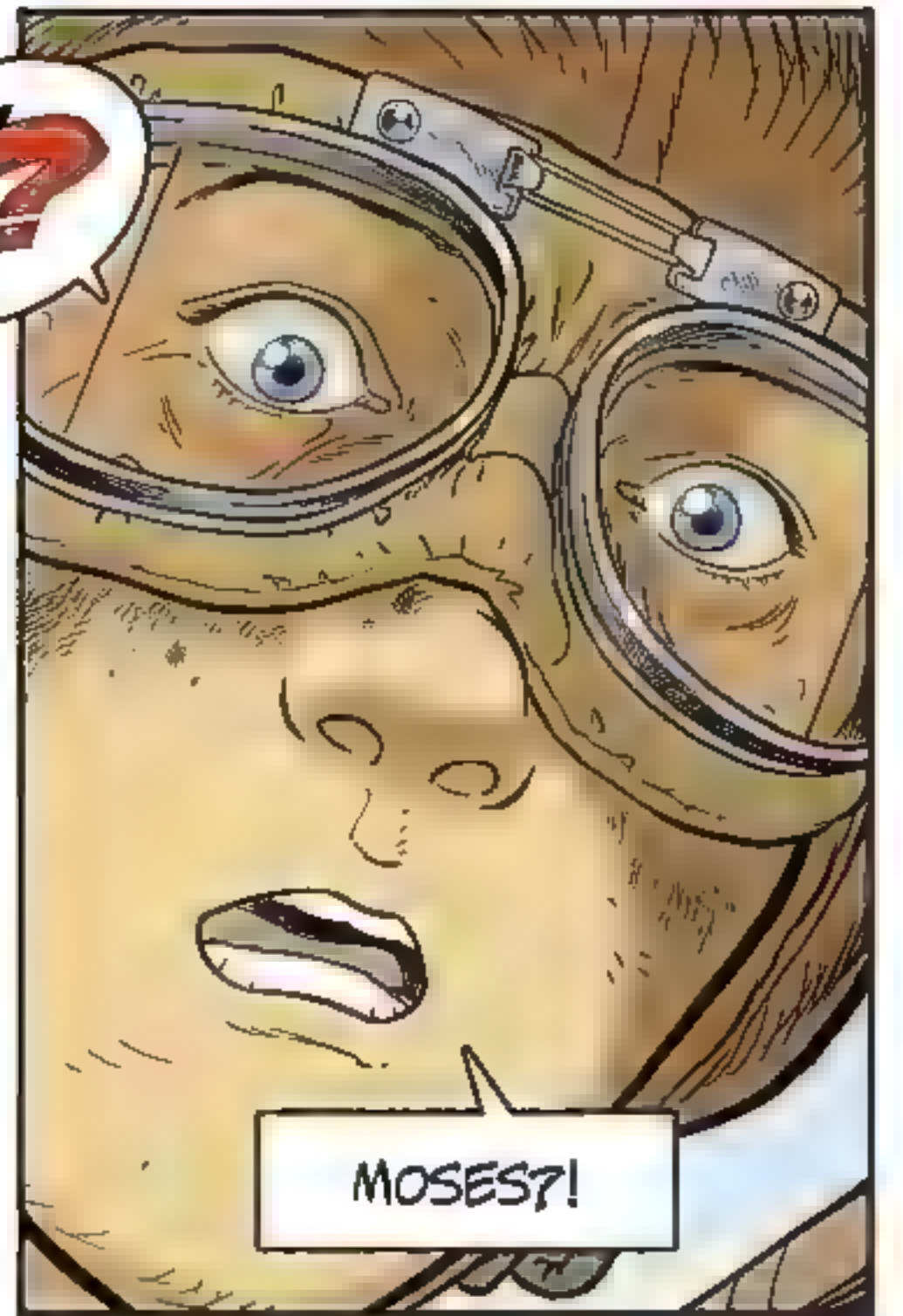
MY BROTHER! MY LITTLE BROTHER, WHO I SHOULD HAVE PROTECTED, WHO I'D LEFT TO DIE!



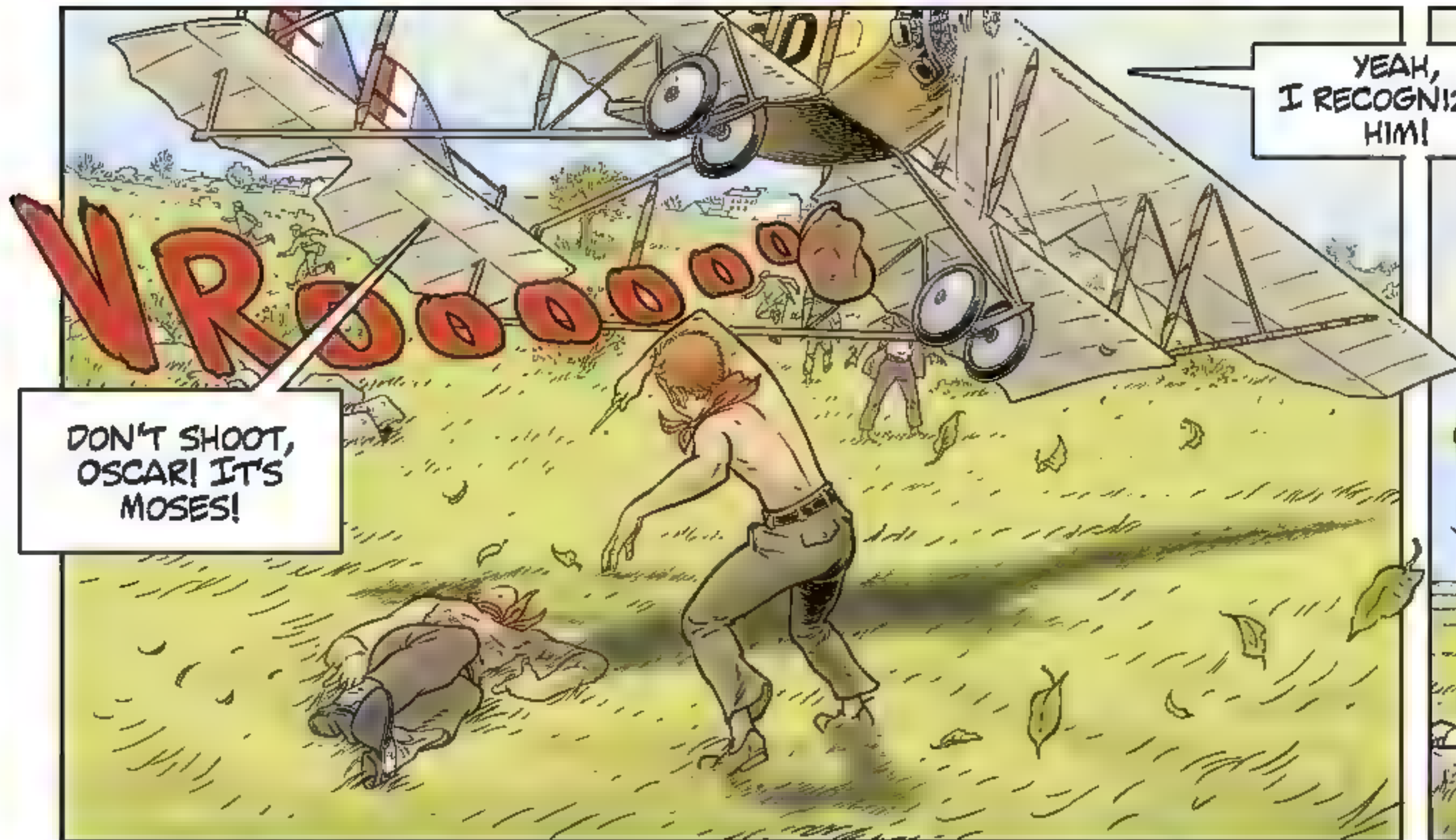
OSCAR! I'LL BRING HER AROUND. YOU TAKE DOWN THAT SCUMBAG EUSTACHE!

NO PROBLEM!





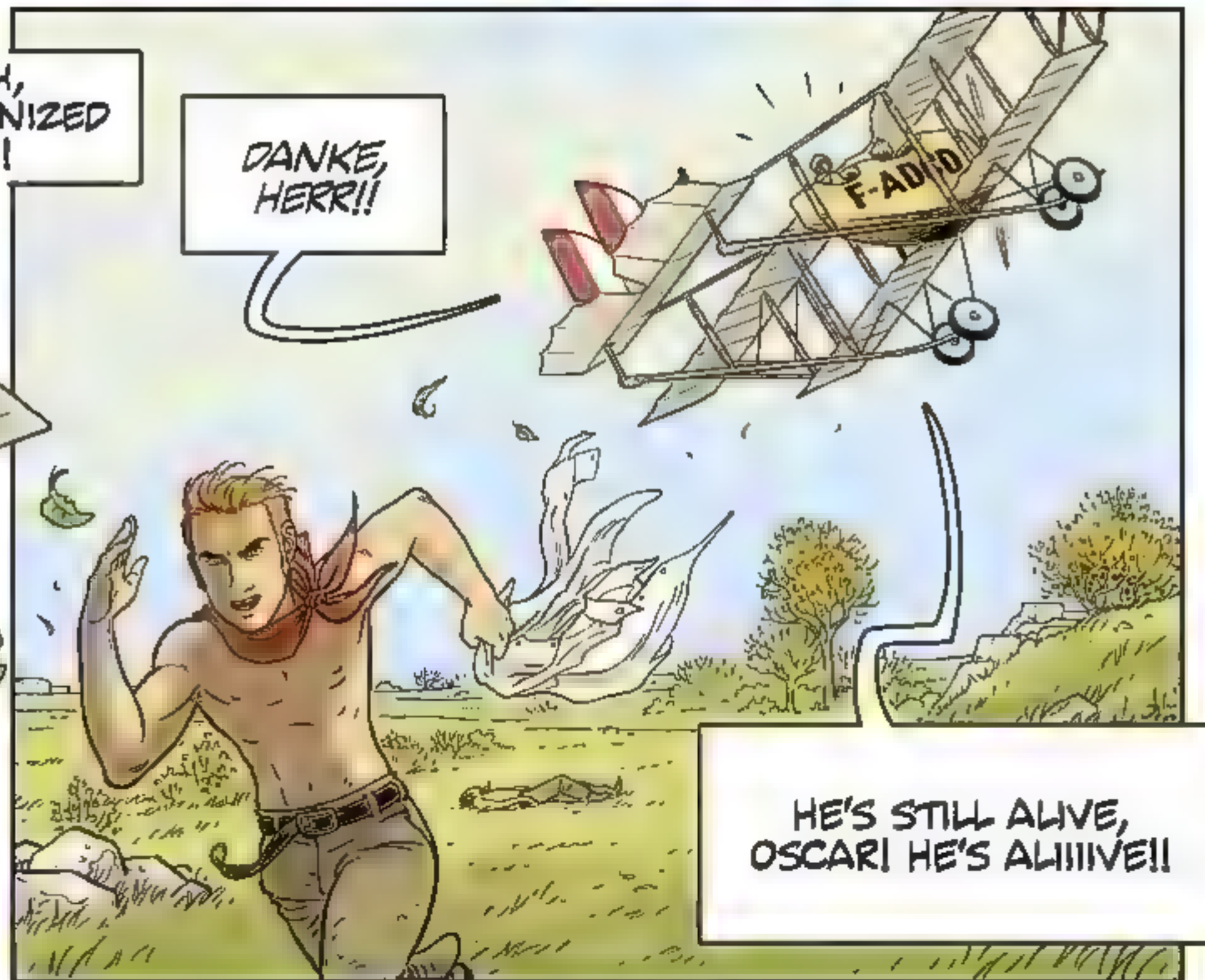
MOSES?



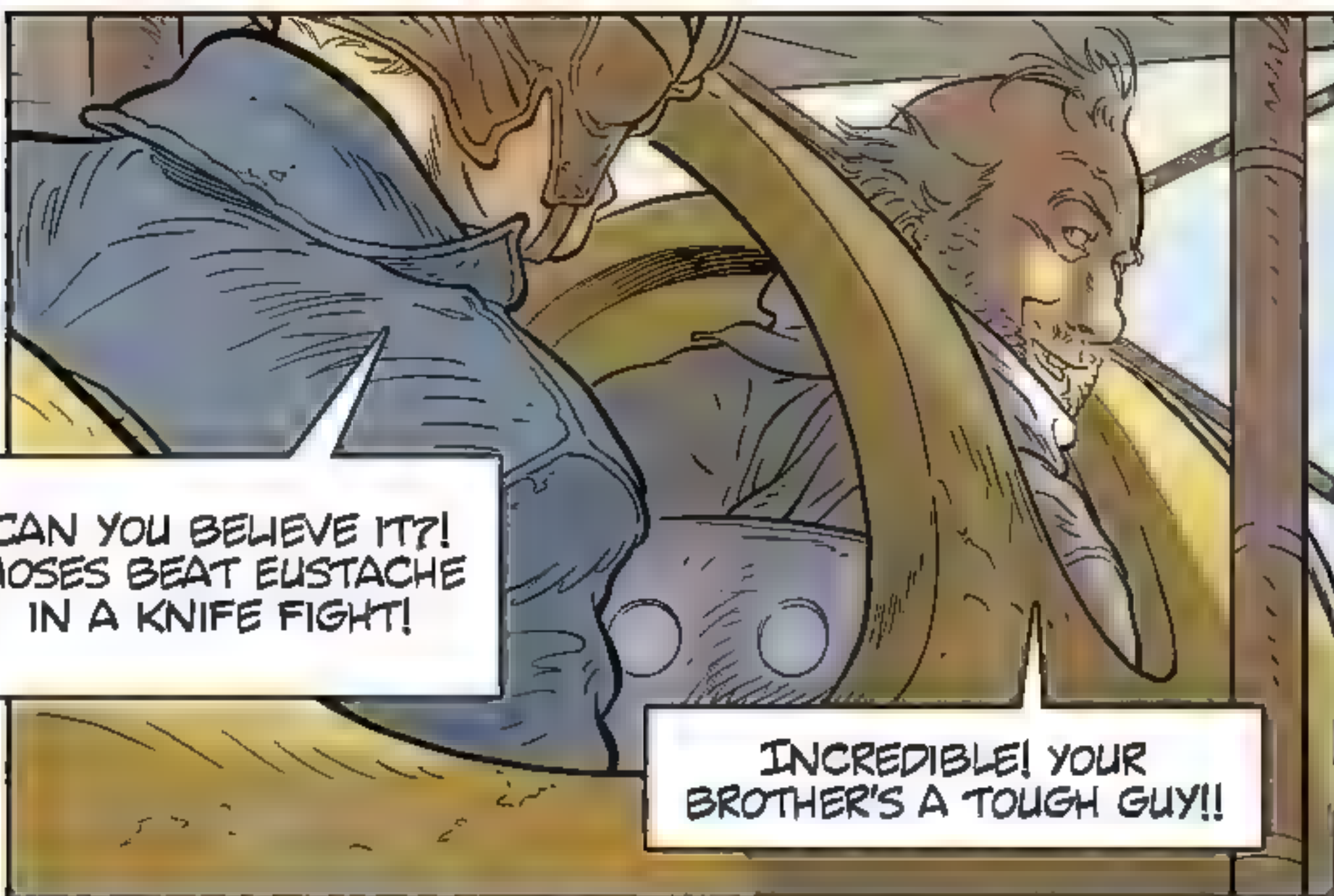
DON'T SHOOT,
OSCAR! IT'S
MOSES!

YEAH,
I RECOGNIZED
HIM!

DANKE,
HERR!!



HE'S STILL ALIVE,
OSCAR! HE'S ALIIIVE!!



CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?!
MOSES BEAT EUSTACHE
IN A KNIFE FIGHT!

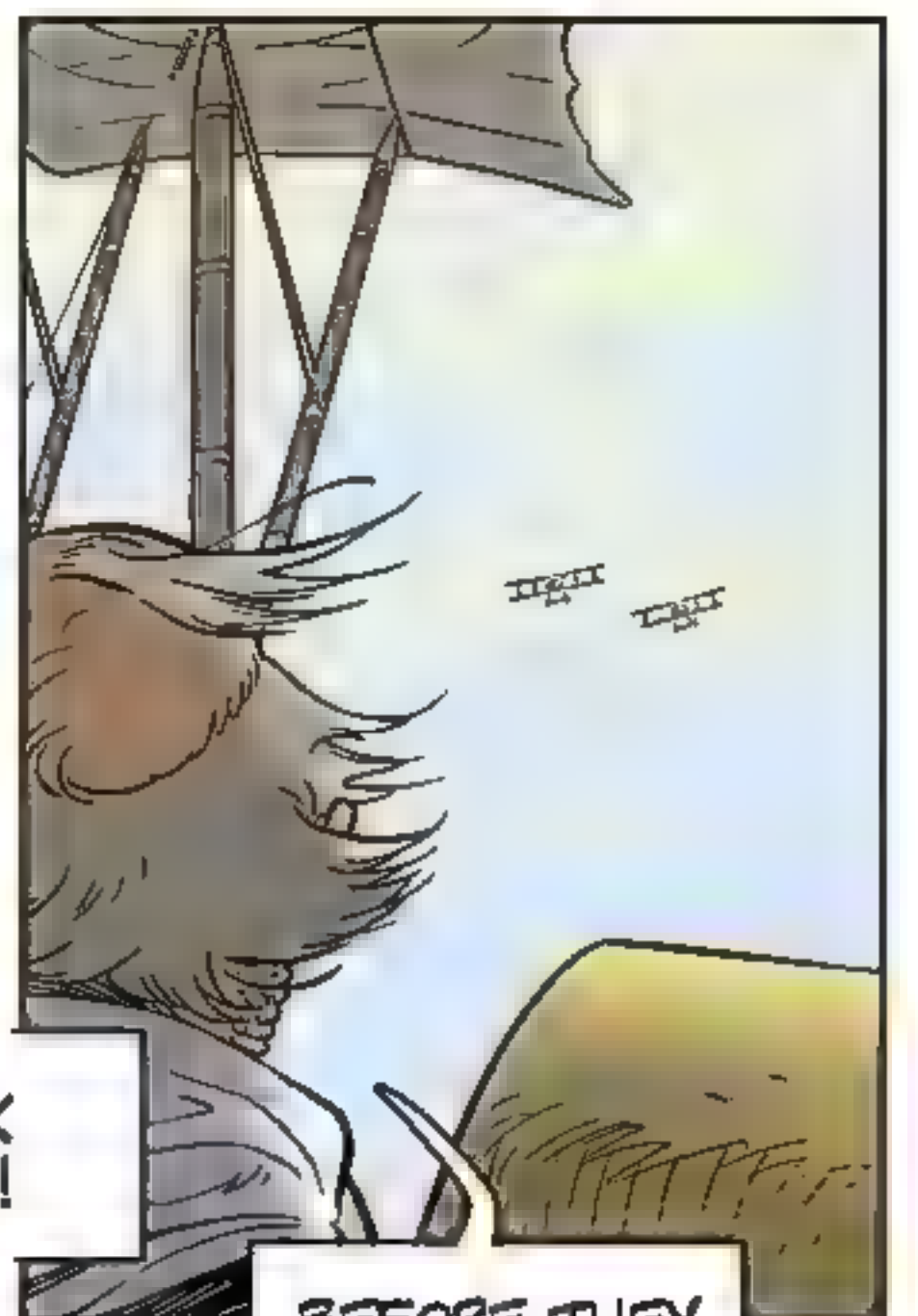
INCREDIBLE! YOUR
BROTHER'S A TOUGH GUY!!



AMAZING! I JUST
CAN'T GET OVER IT!

WELL, I'D
LIKE TO GET
BACK HOME,
JOS--

TURN BACK
RIGHT NOW!



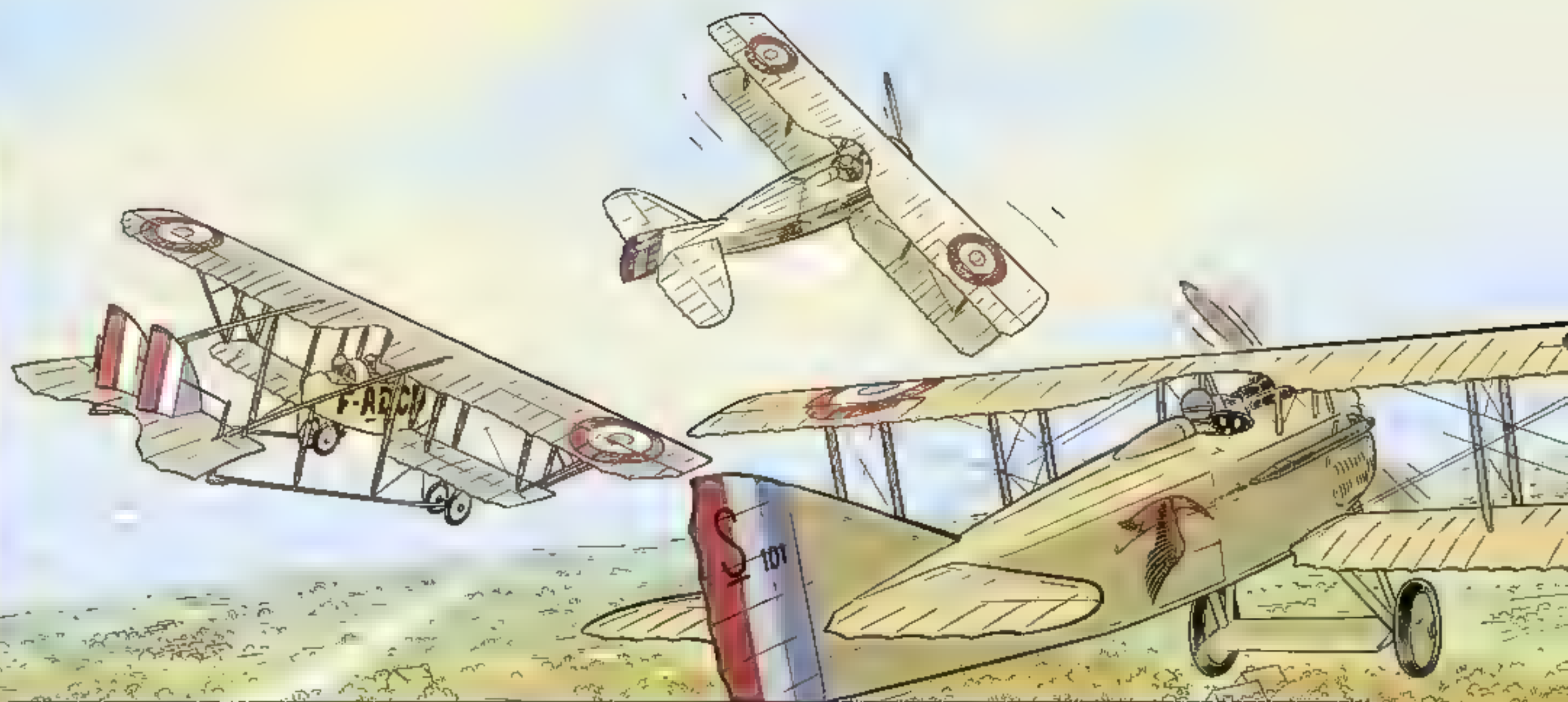
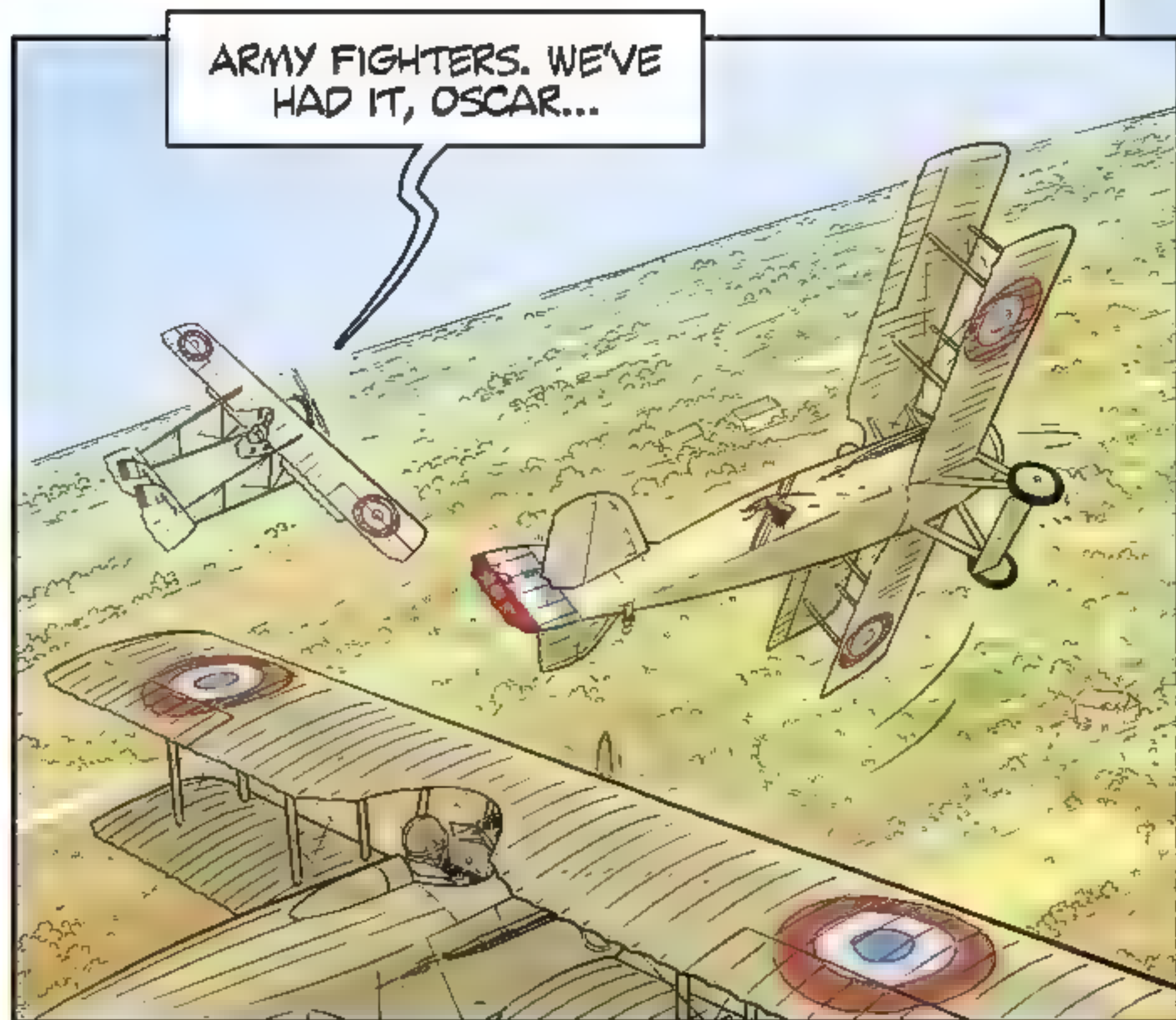
BEFORE THEY
SPOT--



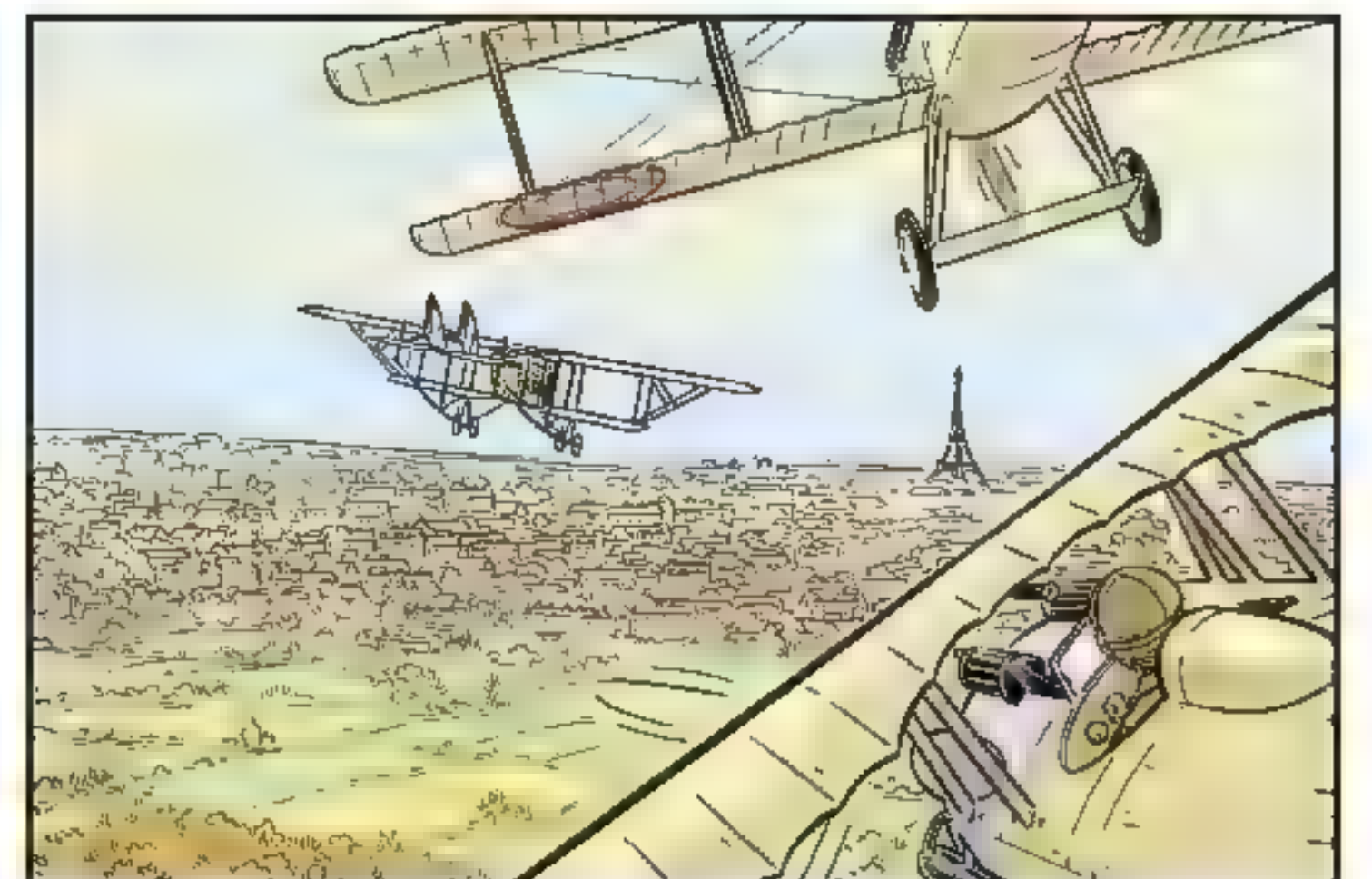
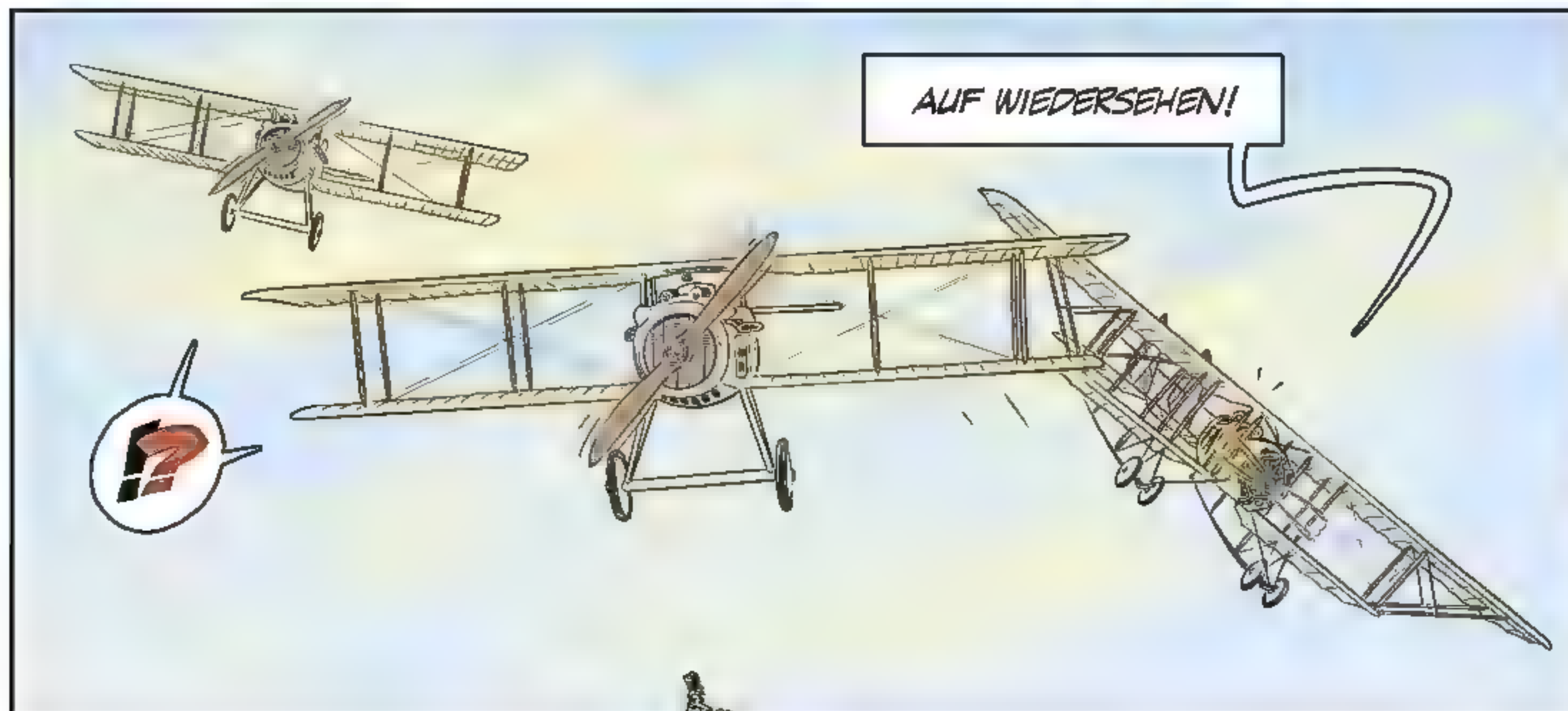
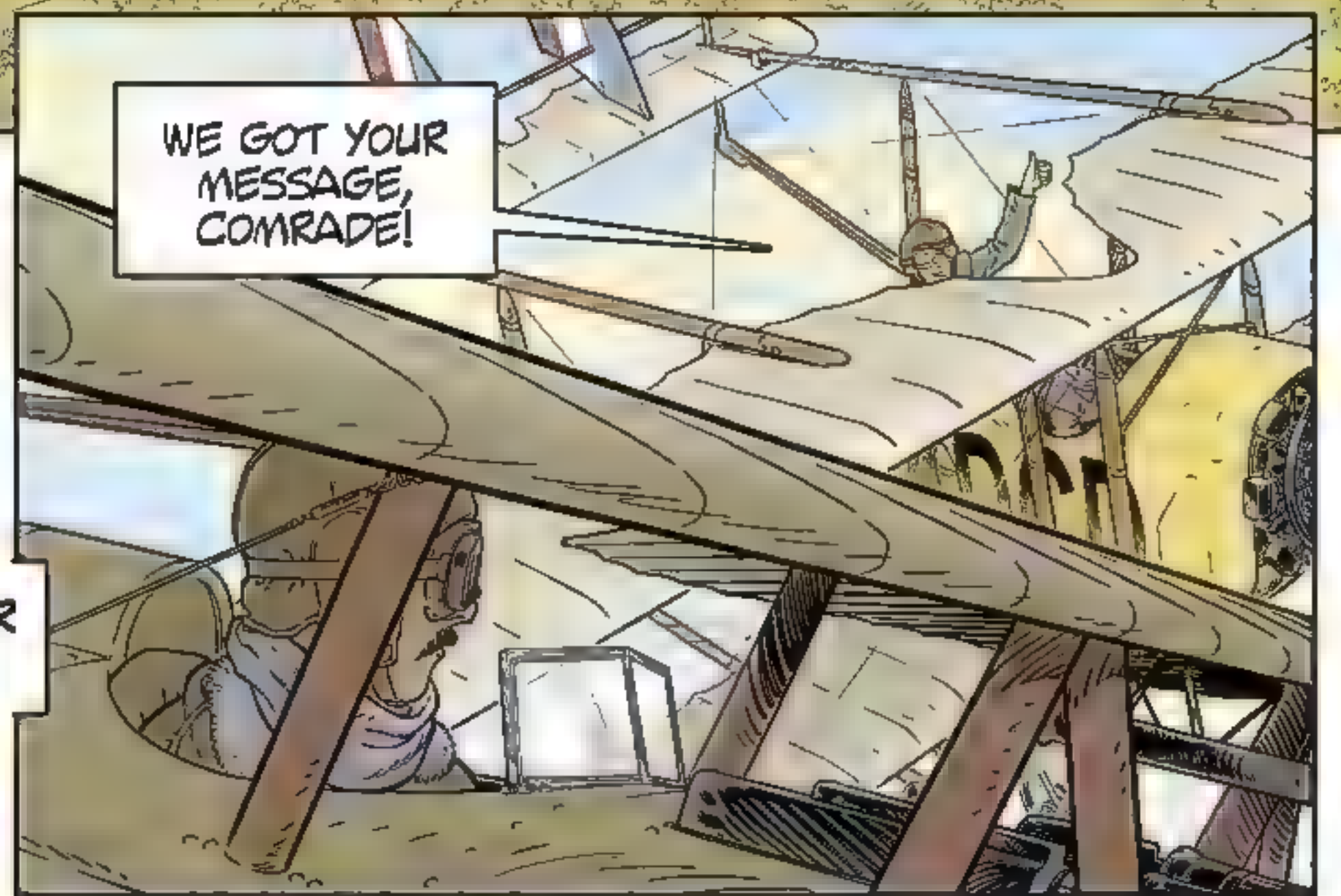
SCHUISSE!

THEY'RE COMING
RIGHT AT US!

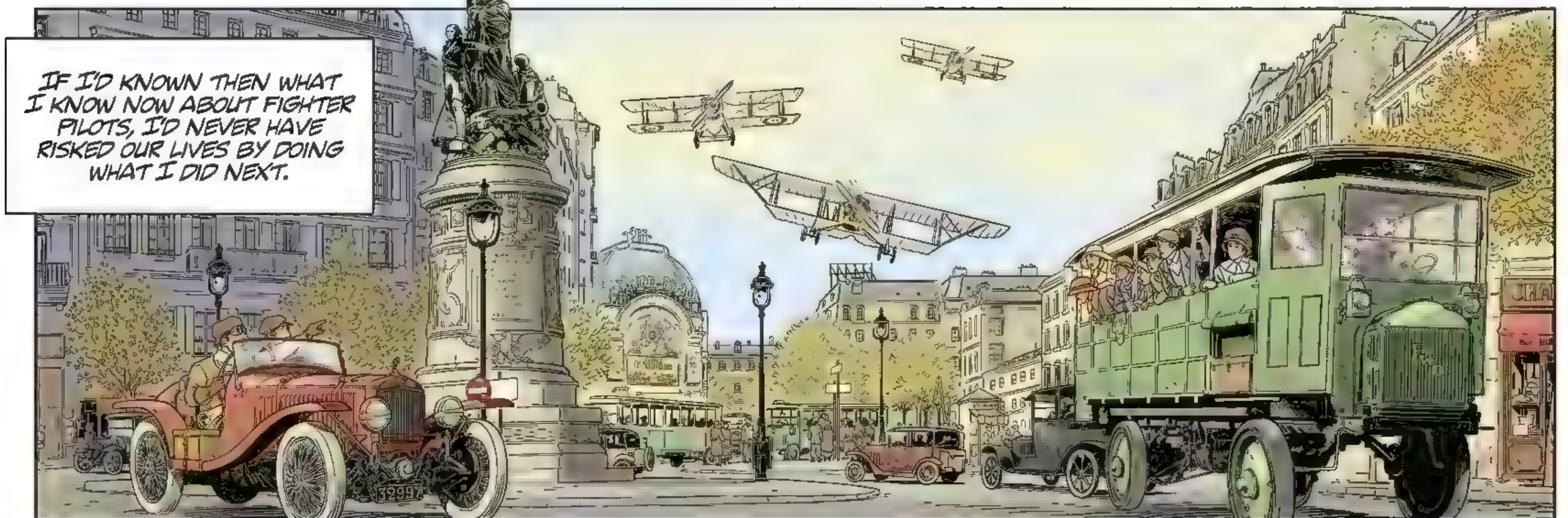
TOO
LATE!

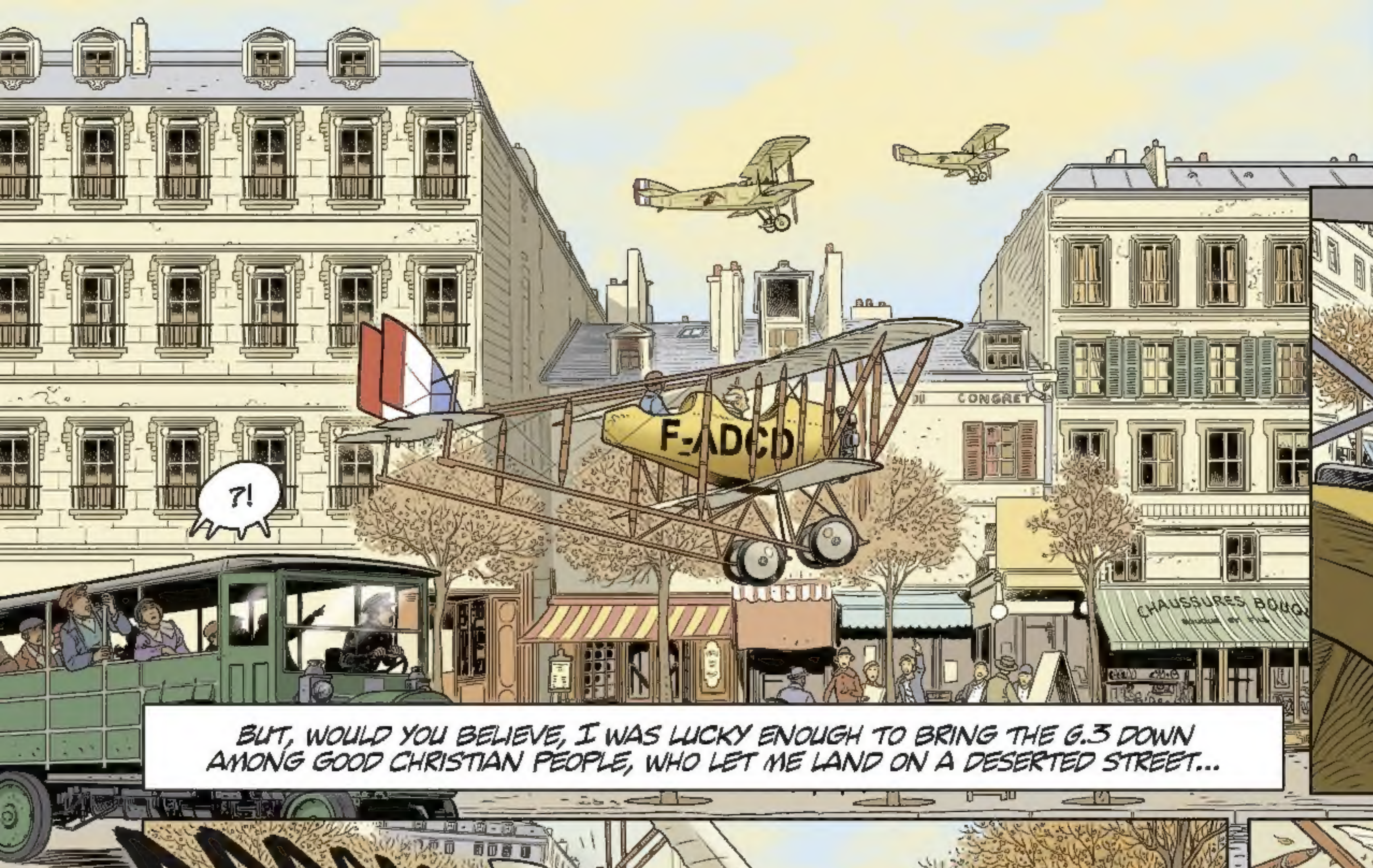


BACK THEN, I HAD YET TO LEARN THE "SIGN LANGUAGE" USED BY PILOTS, BUT THE WAY THE ONE IN FRONT OF US WAS ROCKING HIS WINGS FROM SIDE TO SIDE--AND THE WAY THE OTHER ONE WAS WAVING HIS ARMS ABOUT--LEFT ME IN NO DOUBT AS TO WHAT THEY WANTED.



WE WERE OVER THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY, AND I HOPED OUR TWO ESCORTS WOULDN'T DARE SHOOT US DOWN, IN CASE WE CRASHED INTO SOME HOUSES AND KILLED OR INJURED INNOCENT PEOPLE.

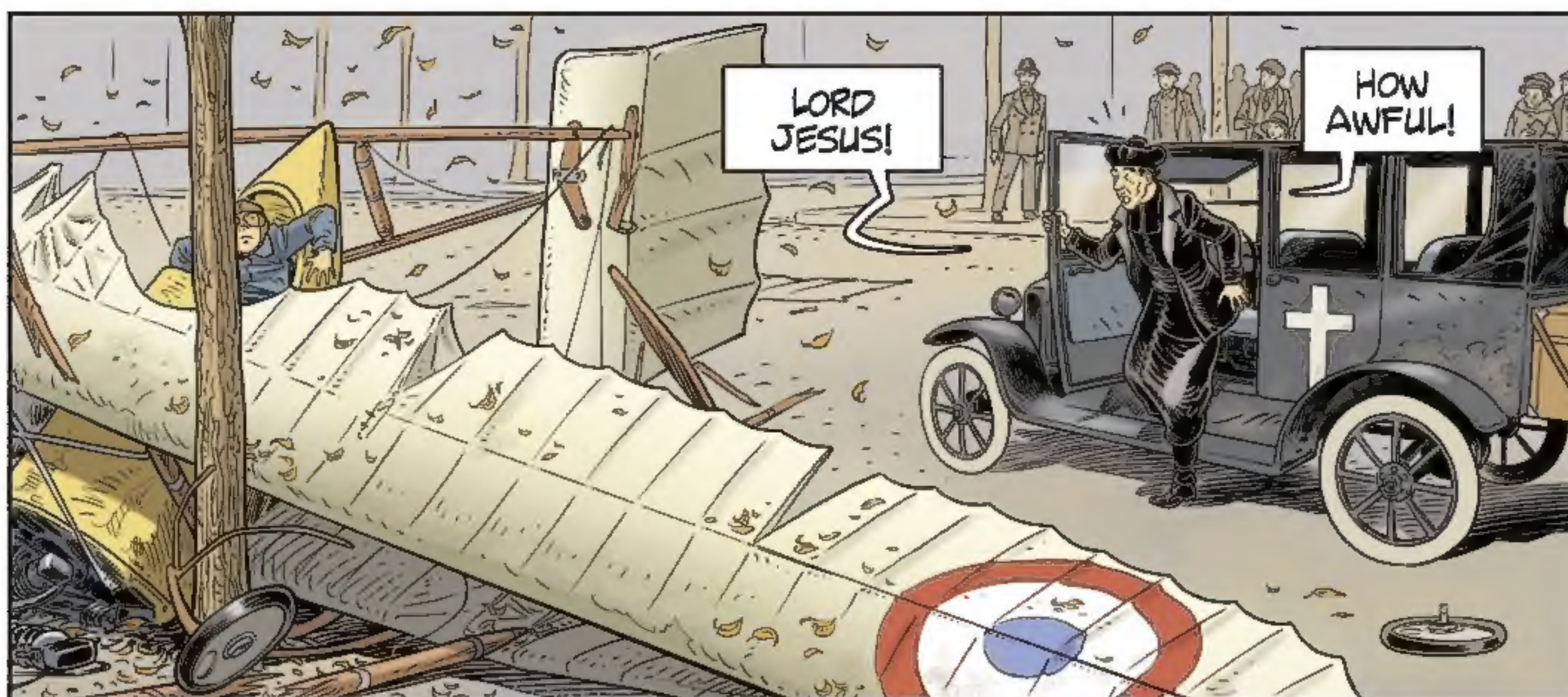
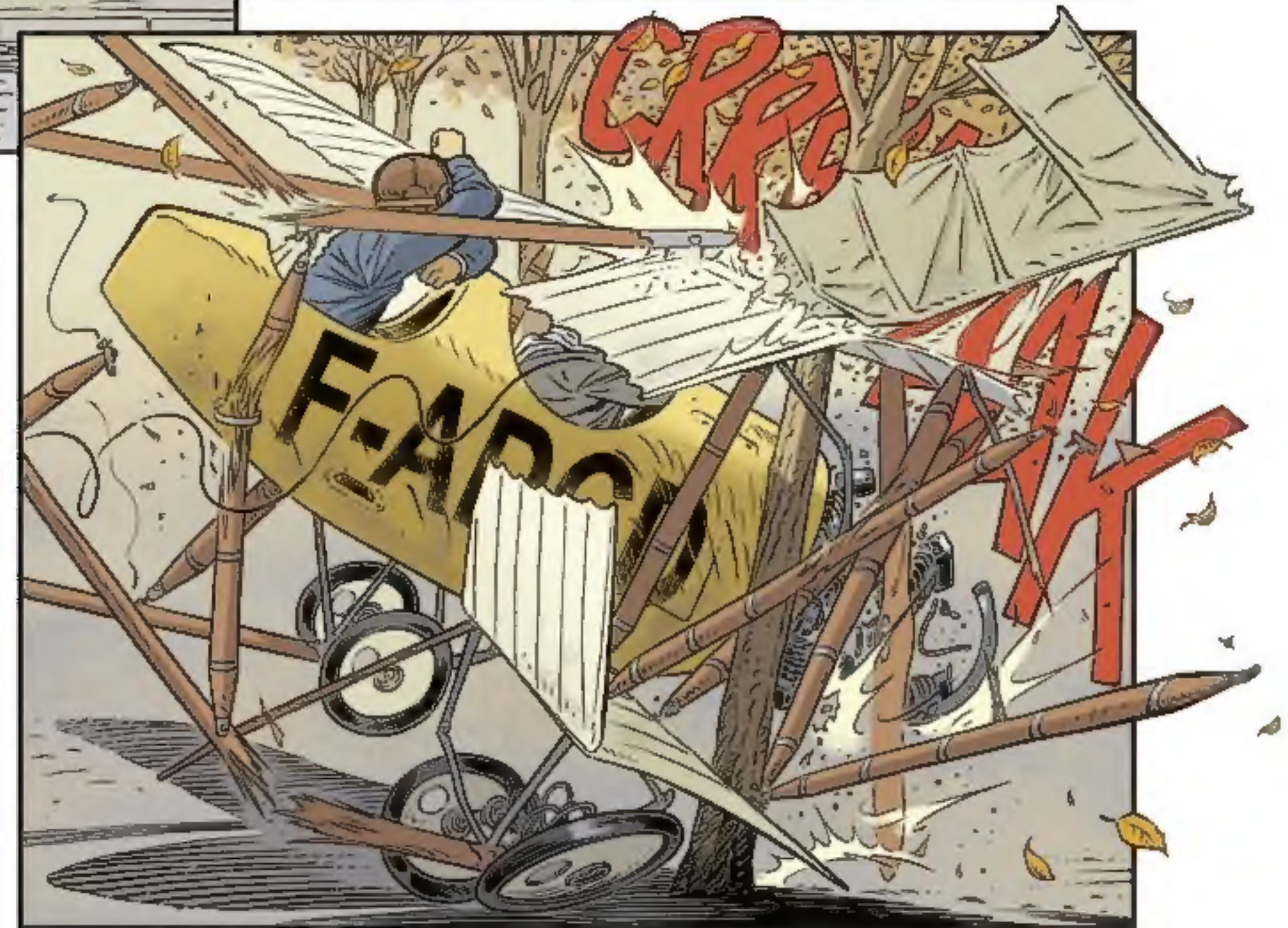
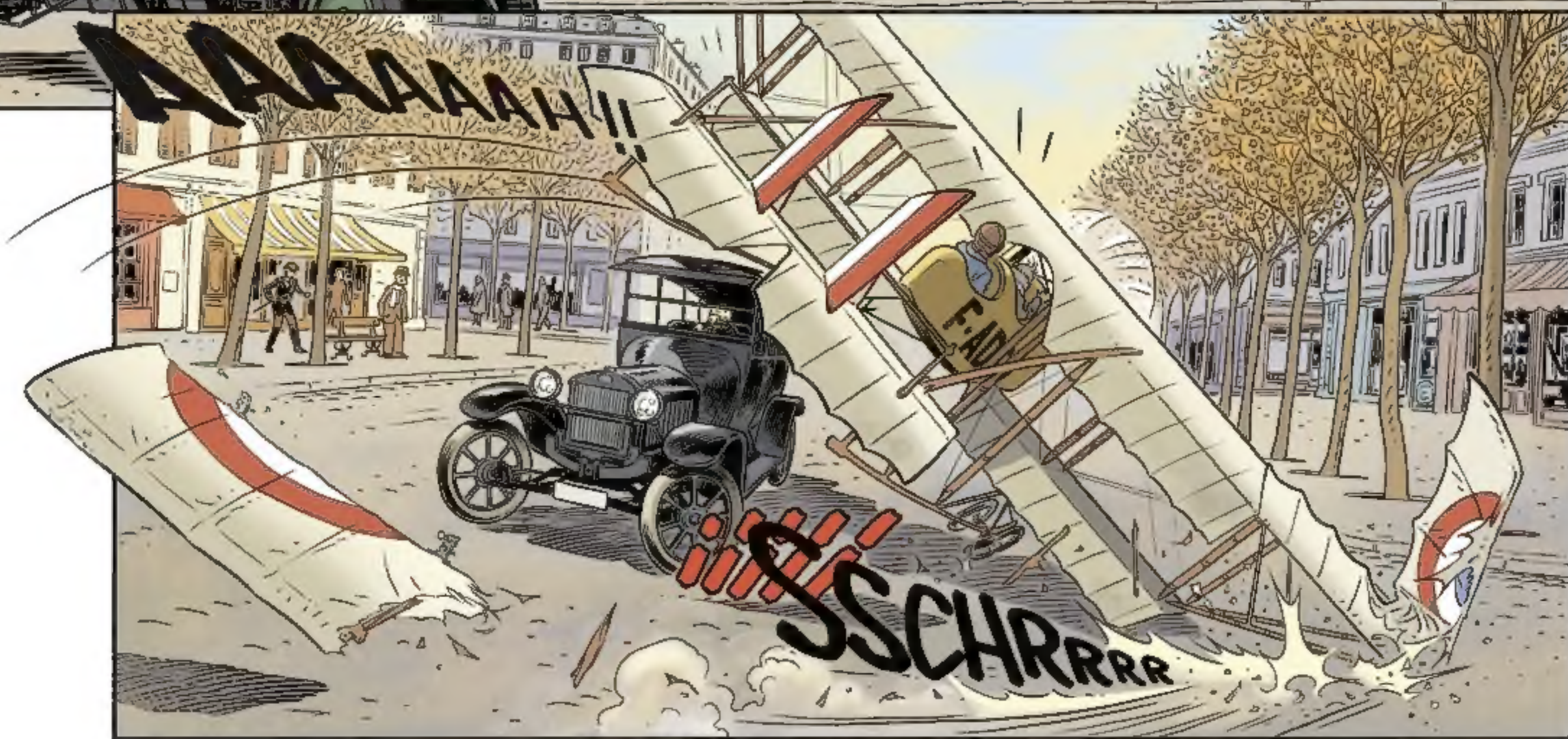




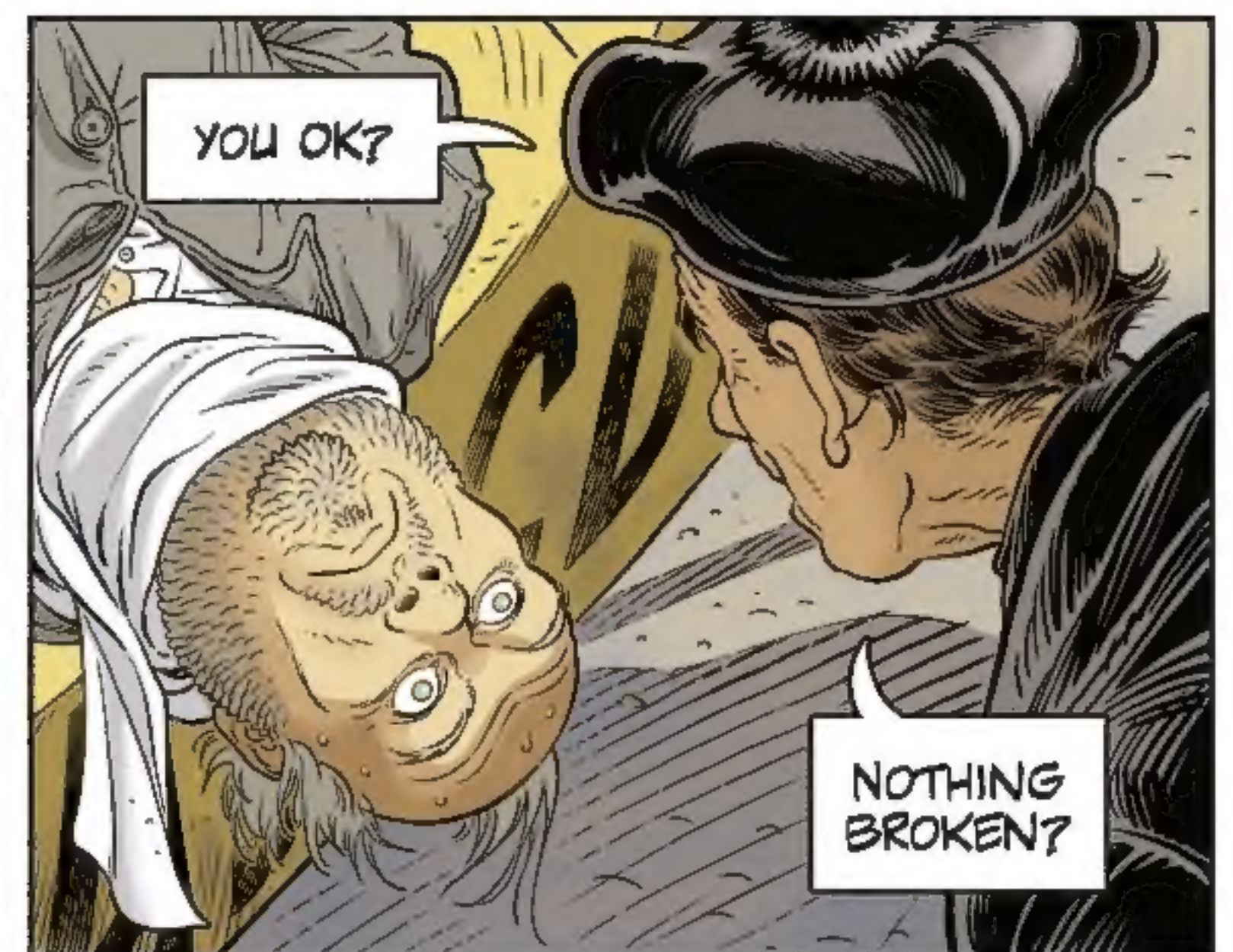
BUT, WOULD YOU BELIEVE, I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO BRING THE G.3 DOWN AMONG GOOD CHRISTIAN PEOPLE, WHO LET ME LAND ON A DESERTED STREET...



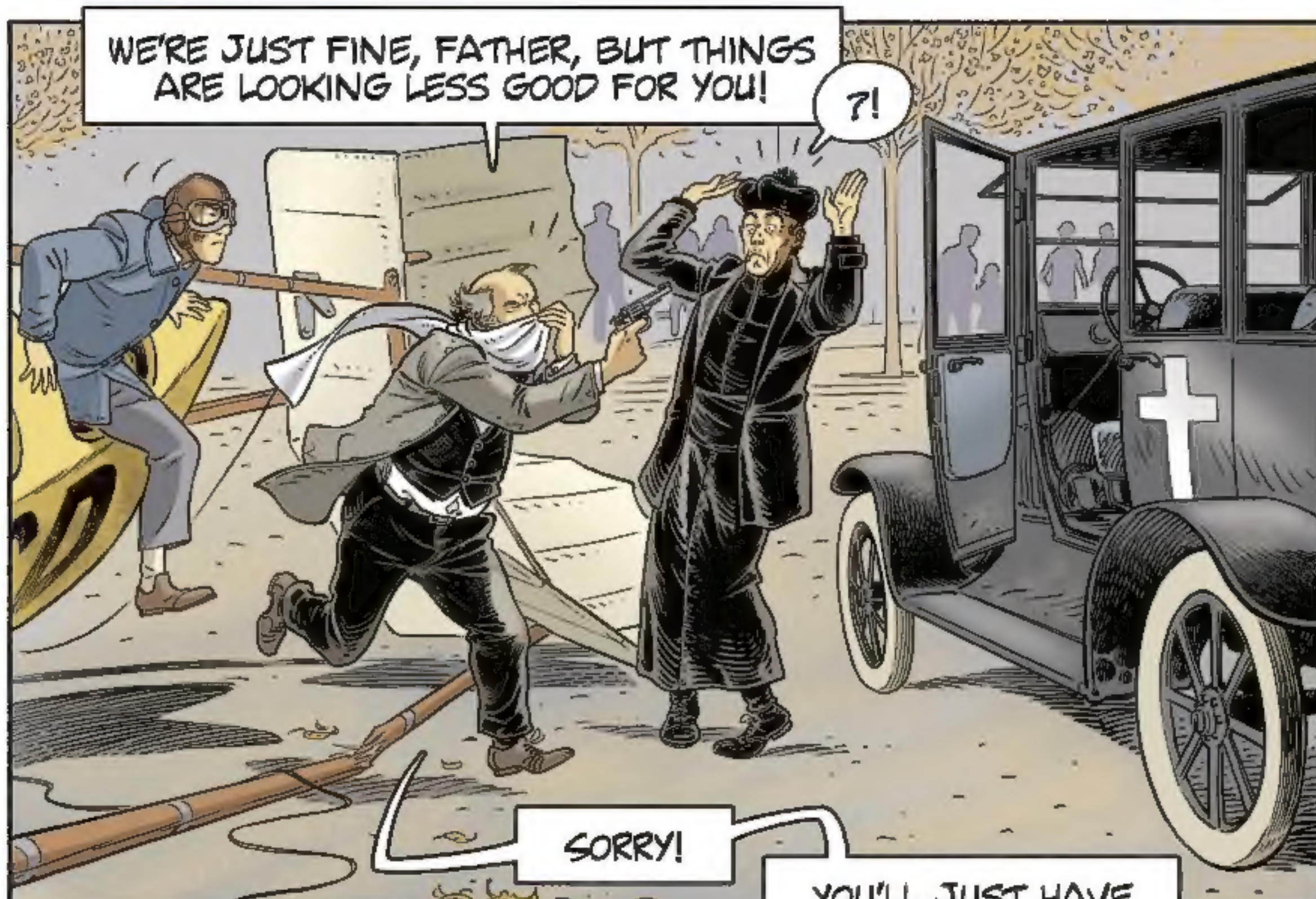
WELL, ALMOST.



HOW AWFUL!



NOTHING BROKEN?



SORRY!
YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO WALK HOME!



GANGSTERS?!

NOT VERY CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR, ADMITTEDLY!
BUT WE'D CAUSED THE PRIEST A MINOR INCONVENIENCE TO SAVE OURSELVES A MUCH GREATER ONE. GOD WOULD UNDERSTAND!

TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR HIM, WE LEFT THE CAR NEAR A CHURCH AND WALKED THE REST OF THE WAY HOME SEPARATELY.

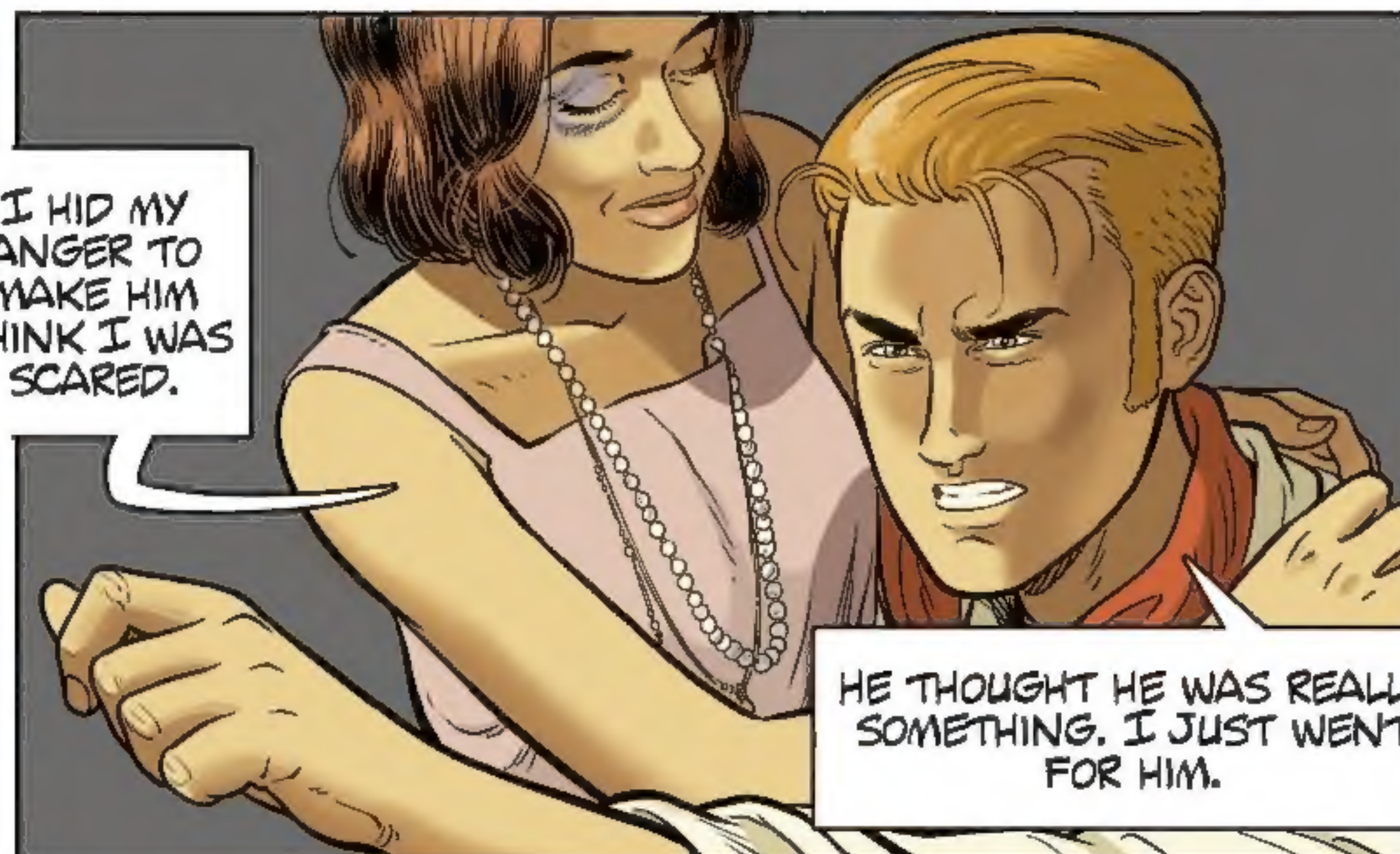


I WASN'T AFRAID OF DYING, THAT'S ALL! WITHOUT ROSA, LIFE SIMPLY WASN'T WORTH LIVING.



CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT SCUM PUT HER ON THE STREET?!

I HID MY ANGER TO MAKE HIM THINK I WAS SCARED.

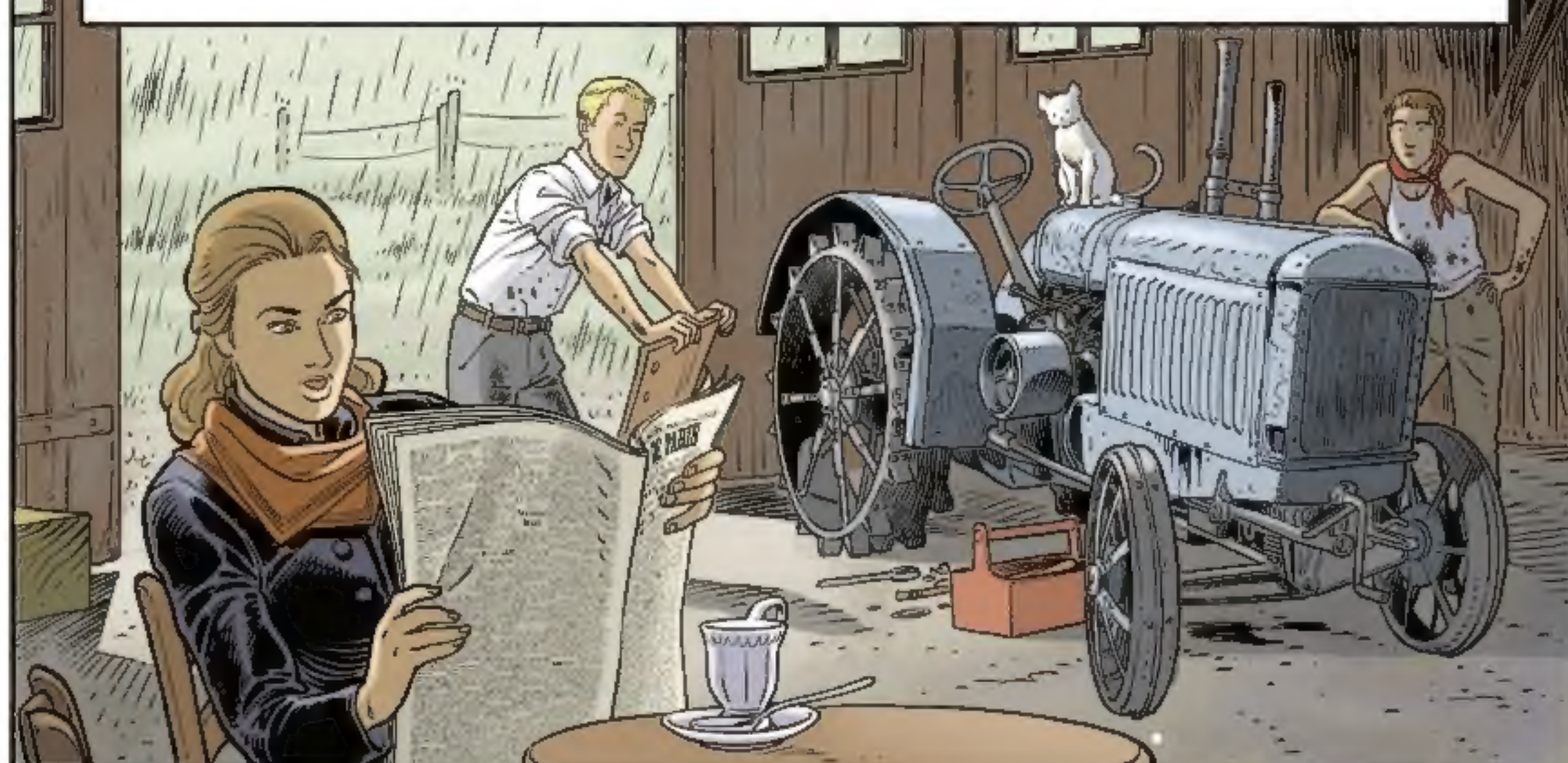


HE THOUGHT HE WAS REALLY SOMETHING. I JUST WENT FOR HIM.

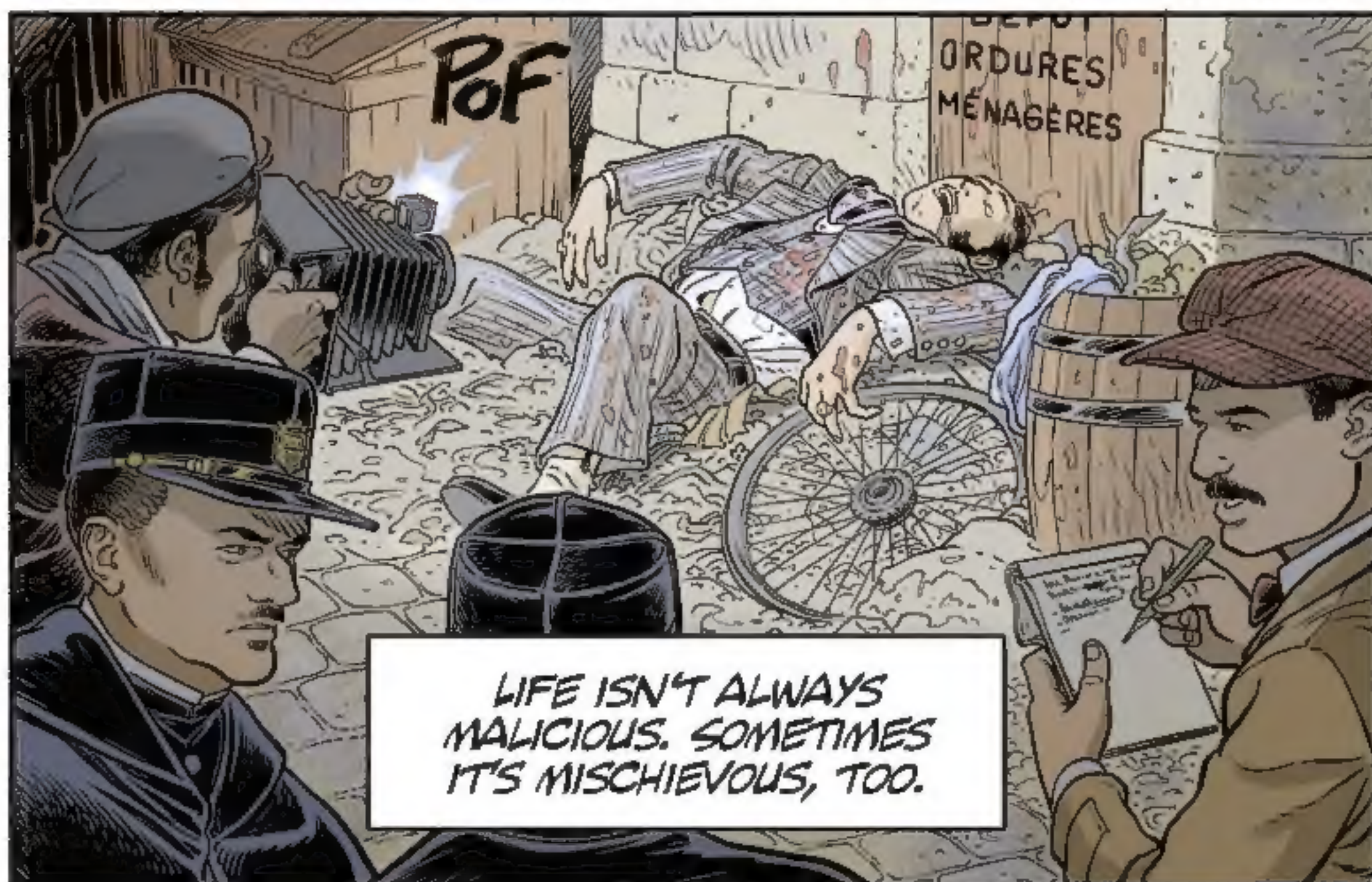
OUR CAUDRON G.3 WAS ON ALL THE FRONT PAGES, OF COURSE. THE POLICE HAD PROBABLY WORKED OUT THAT IT WAS THE STOLEN PLANE, BUT THEY DIDN'T TAKE IT ANY FURTHER, THANKFULLY.



THE GOOD THING ABOUT MY ESCAPE WAS THAT IT OPENED MY EYES, AND I STOPPED SMUGGLING. IN ANY CASE, MY PLANE WAS GONE, SO SMILEY HAD TO FIND ANOTHER PILOT. A PIECE OF CAKE, IN HIS EYES.

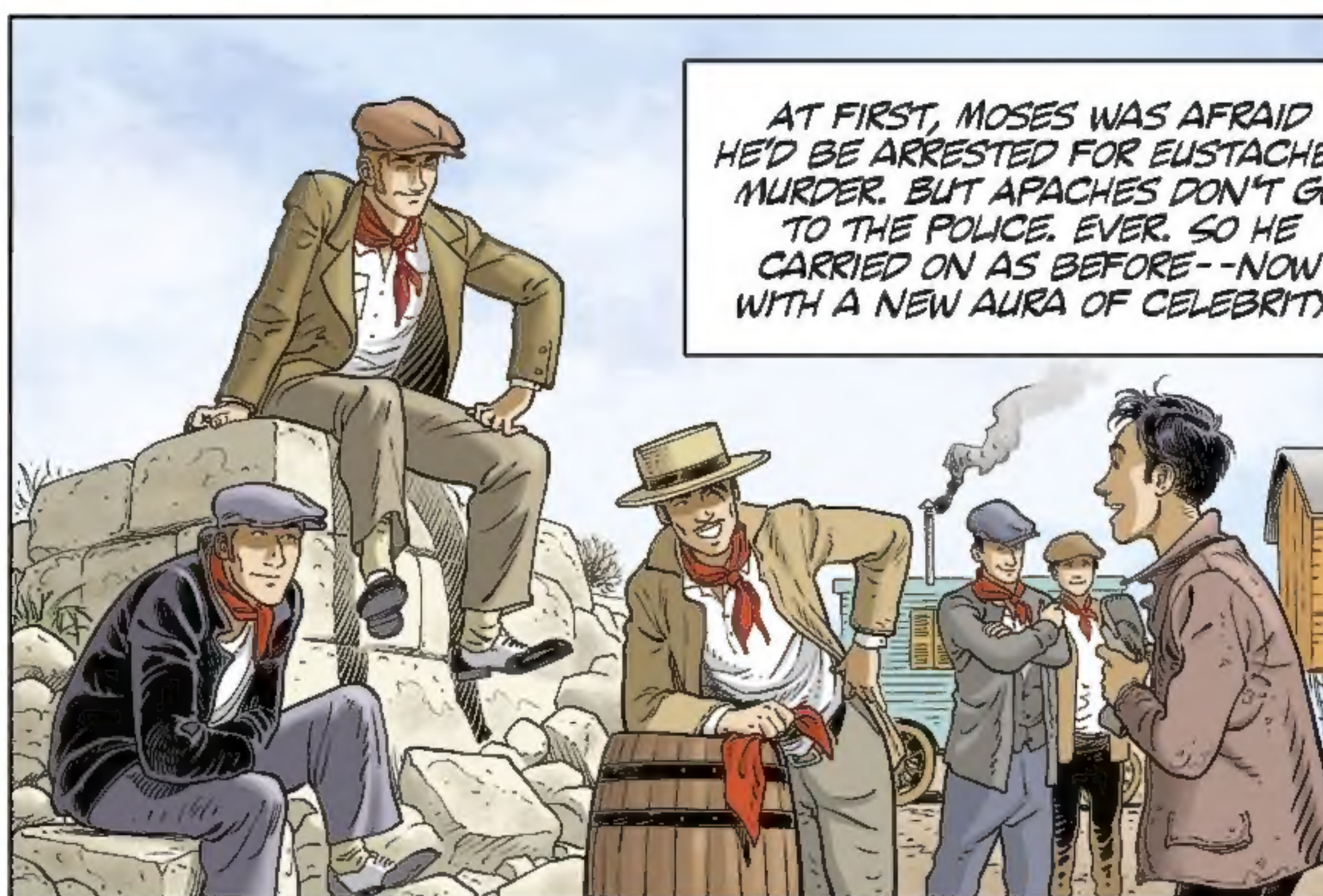


BUT HE NEVER HAD THE CHANCE. TEN DAYS AFTER OUR ADVENTURE, HE WAS GUNNED DOWN BY "BELLEVILLE JACKO," APPARENTLY AFTER SOME STUPID ARGUMENT OVER A WOMAN.



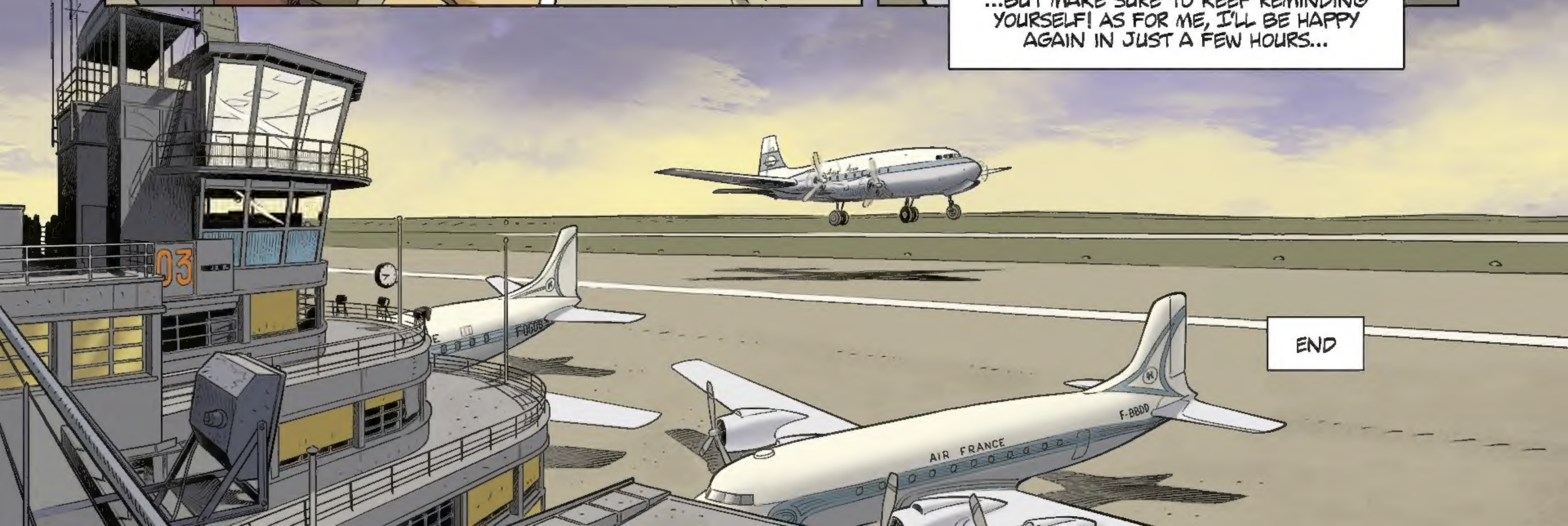
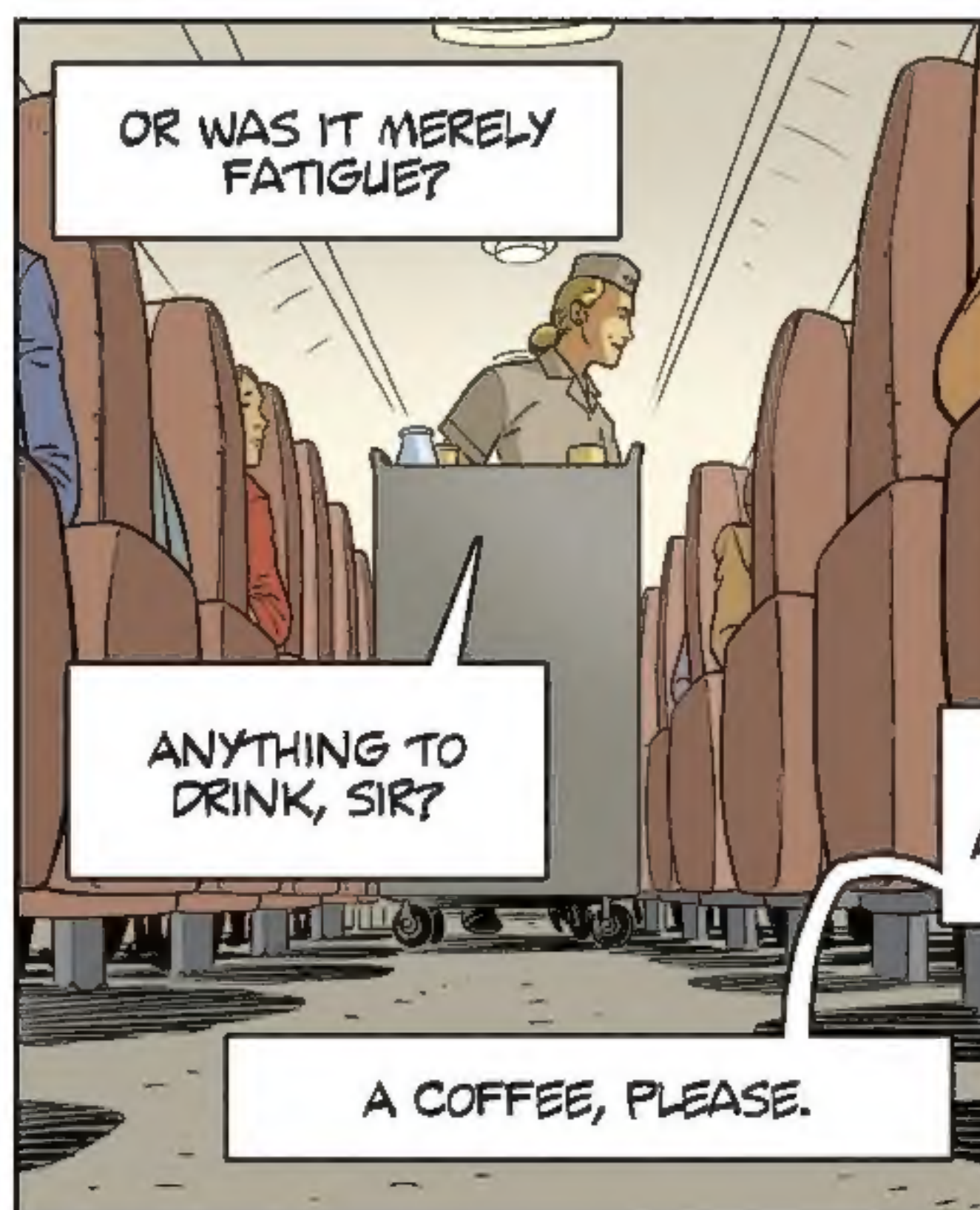
LIFE ISN'T ALWAYS MALICIOUS. SOMETIMES IT'S MISCHIEVOUS, TOO.

AT FIRST, MOSES WAS AFRAID HE'D BE ARRESTED FOR EUSTACHE'S MURDER. BUT APACHES DON'T GO TO THE POLICE. EVER. SO HE CARRIED ON AS BEFORE--NOW WITH A NEW AURA OF CELEBRITY.





YANN CALEC CLOSED THE JOURNAL IN WHICH "HARD KNOCK" TANGUY HAD SO INTIMATELY CONFIDED, AND SAT STARING AT IT FOR A LONG MOMENT. A SUDDEN URGE TO EMBRACE HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER MADE HIM SHUDDER.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to my old friend Marc Dolidier, aviation buff and recreational pilot,
for his technical advice and attentive reading.

JCK

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